

Dubai's torrential downpour unleashes havoc on city's commercial hubs

Tuesday, 16 April 2024, saw Dubai - known for its modern skyline adorned with towering skyscrapers, luxurious hotels, and opulent lifestyle - facing its most substantial rainfall on record, with more than 142mm of rain documented over 24 hours, as per National Centre of Meteorology data.



Source: [Pexels](#) A photo taken of Dubai's skyline under a stormy sky in October 2020.

This is the highest rainfall recorded in the emirate in 75 years.

Shopping malls, subways and roads were flooded, and airplanes were unable to land and take off at Dubai's International Airport, as the runways were submerged in water.

Footage from central Dubai depicted numerous vehicles submerged on a flooded section of Sheikh Zayed Road, exacerbating extensive traffic congestion along the 12-lane highway.

Caroline Seubert, a 29-year-old British tourist from Leyland in Lancashire, recounted her harrowing experience to the BBC. She and her husband had ventured to Dubai Mall on Tuesday morning, unaware of the potential hazards, as their hotel had not cautioned them.

Despite being 22 weeks pregnant, Seubert found herself amidst chaos as the mall flooded and ceilings collapsed, prompting closure by 7:30 pm.

"We were instructed to vacate, but with the metro and taxis out of service, we were stranded," she recalls. Their only refuge was the mall lobby, where they spent the night.

Although they eventually secured a taxi the next morning, it couldn't reach their hotel and left them at another mall en route.

The possible role of cloud-seeding

There are indications that recent cloud-seeding operations conducted in the skies above the UAE could have played a role in the unprecedented occurrence. Cloud-seeding, a technique involving the dispersion of salt particles into clouds to induce rainfall, has been practised in the United Arab Emirates for over a decade.

Nevertheless, meteorologist Maarten Ambaum from the University of Reading dismisses the notion that these floods could be attributed to cloud-seeding.

"The UAE does have an operational cloud-seeding programme to enhance the rainfall in this arid part of the world, however there is no technology in existence that can create or even severely modify this kind of rainfall event," he says.

“ *Dubai's historic flood in just 30 seconds.* pic.twitter.com/gvfqzkuW2— Prayag (@theprayagtiwari) [April 17, 2024](#) ”

Specialist meteorologist, Ahmed Habib, disagrees.

Habib notes cloud seeding operations were conducted by two planes on both Monday and Tuesday, totaling seven missions over the span of two days.

The country did not provide any details regarding the extent of the damage.

Mop up operations have begun as officials have dispatched tanker trucks onto the streets and highways to remove the excess water.

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