



Turkey: 2021 Kastamonu Flash Floods

When Rivers Rise: Responding
to Extreme Weather

In August 2021, extreme rainfall triggered devastating flash floods in Turkey Black Sea region, particularly affecting Bozkurt. The disaster highlighted both climate challenges and the importance of community resilience and coordinated emergency response.

The Disaster

On August 11, 2021, extreme rainfall - once-in-a-century intensity - fell on the mountainous Black Sea region. Rivers swelled rapidly, overwhelming banks. In Bozkurt, the Ezine River became a raging torrent, sweeping through the town center. Buildings collapsed into the water. Cars carried away like toys. Families fled to upper floors as water rushed through homes.



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Emergency Response

Emergency services faced unique challenges rescuing people in an active flood. Helicopters airlifted stranded residents from rooftops. Boats navigated debris-filled streets. AFAD mobilized resources, but damaged roads made access difficult. Local volunteers formed human chains to pull people from water. The community's fire station became a coordination hub, with citizens and officials working side by side.

Recovery and Adaptation

As floodwaters receded, thick mud covered everything. Power and water systems were destroyed. Families had lost everything. Emergency teams focused on basics: shelter, food, clean water, medical care. Mobile kitchens fed thousands. Temporary shelters housed displaced families. Recovery meant rethinking the relationship with the river: engineers redesigned flood defenses, buildings in high-risk areas were relocated, new early warning systems were installed, and the community developed evacuation plans and conducted regular drills.

Key Lesson

Climate change brings more extreme weather events. Communities must adapt through better infrastructure, early warning systems, and local preparedness. When disaster strikes, local knowledge and community networks are as important as official response systems.