



German Towns on Elbe Fight Floods as Water Rolls North

By Richard Weiss - Jun 9, 2013

(Corrects currency conversion in fifth paragraph.)

German cities and towns along the Elbe river called in emergency workers, volunteers and soldiers to reinforce dikes against record volumes of water rolling north.

“At this point there isn’t much more we can do but pray,” Magdeburg Mayor Lutz Truemper said today in a televised speech after the city was put on disaster alert.

Officials in Magdeburg, a city of 230,000, anticipate the Elbe will crest at a record, fed by the Saale river just upstream. The rising water led authorities to evacuate areas east of the Elbe, according to the website of Magdeburg, a 1,200-year-old medieval city and capital of the state of Saxony-Anhalt.

Emergency workers and volunteers joined more than 19,000 soldiers who have been trying for a week to limit damage from the flooding in the country, securing dikes, dropping supplies from helicopters, evacuating residents and providing food and shelter for rescue teams. The flood is the worst on record in some parts of [Germany](#).

The losses insurers face from the flooding, at 2.5 billion euros (\$3.3 billion), may top the amount paid out following 2002 floods because more insurance has been purchased since then, according to estimates by consultants Meyerthole Siems Kohlruss cited in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung.

Damage Estimates

Economic damage incurred since the floods began on June 5 may total 6 billion euros, the newspaper reported, citing Cologne-based economic institute IDW.

While dikes in Magdeburg were still holding today, two outside of the city broke earlier. In other places authorities have opened flood gates in an effort to smooth the Elbe peak as it rolls toward Hamburg on the [North Sea](#).

Wittenberge, 117 kilometers (73 miles) north of Magdeburg, was partially evacuated yesterday as the Elbe is expected to crest there on June 12, according to estimates by [Elwis](#), the country’s waterways information portal.

In Magdeburg, the Elbe reached a peak of 7.45 meters (24 feet) at 6 a.m., compared with 6.80 meters

in 2002, the previous record. Dessau, 62 kilometers upstream, saw the Elbe peak late yesterday, the state's [flood protection office](#) said. Further north, the city of Lauenburg in the state of Schleswig-Holstein, where the peak is expected to hit June 13, has been partially closed to traffic.

The Danube river in [Hungary](#) was expected to crest in the capital Budapest late today as workers built defenses in the city to guard against the rising water, the [Associated Press](#) reported.

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