

Nevada Flood History

Flooding of August 2003

A sudden severe storm unleashed unprecedented rainfall on northwest Las Vegas Aug. 19, 2003, sending rivers rushing down local streets and over large portions of U.S. 95, trapping dozens in the fast-rising waters and stranding hundreds more in the area.

LEFT: Floodwaters submerge Gowan Road under a closed U.S. Highway 95. Photo by K.M. Cannon.

Southern Nevada's worst floods

• June 10, 1932: A storm drenches Boulder City, killing two and submerging a 100-foot-wide swath of Eldorado Valley under 5 feet of water.

• July 13, 1955: Hundreds of homes and stores in Las Vegas are damaged by floodwaters that are 4 feet deep in the Twin Lakes subdivision. Property damage is estimated at \$3 million.

• Sept. 14, 1974: Twelve feet of water smashes through Eldorado Canyon, 50 miles southeast of Las Vegas, killing nine at Nelson's Landing. Everything in the flood's path is swept into Lake Mohave, including a marina, restaurant, gasoline dock, boats, 50 cars and 20 mobile homes.

• July 3, 1975: Two people die after being swept into flood currents in North Las Vegas. Up to 500 cars at Caesars Palace are damaged by floodwaters in the casino's parking lot. Damage is estimated at \$4.5 million.

• Aug. 10, 1981: In Moapa Valley, 80 miles north of Las Vegas, two storms 14 miles apart drop 6.5 inches and 5 inches of rain, respectively, with most of it -- 85 percent -- occurring in 15 minutes. Rains of such intensity happen once every 200 to 500 years, scientists believe. Damage in Moapa Valley is estimated at \$10 million.

• Aug. 10, 1983: Four inches of rain fall on the Flamingo Wash watershed. Several days after the flash flood, a child dies when soil that had been carried off collapses. Damage is estimated at \$3 million.

• July through September 1984: Storms cause massive property damage, prompting President Reagan to declare Clark County a disaster area. Seven people die in two incidents where floodwaters fill Flamingo Wash, Las Vegas Wash and Blue Diamond Wash, a tributary of Duck Creek. Later, a child dies when a dry wash caves in. Damage to public facilities is \$9 million.

• June 10, 1990: A 25-year-old woman drowns when her car is swept into a flood channel, and a 19-year-old man drowns in Green Valley, where he is swept into a manhole during a storm that drops 1.57 inches of rain in an hour.

• July 16, 1990: A 25-year-old woman drowns after her car is swept off Arville Street and into Flamingo Wash. Her body is found downstream in the lower level of the Imperial Palace parking garage. Storms during the month cause \$8.7 million in damage to public facilities.

• Aug. 23, 1995: Thunderstorms with winds estimated at 75 mph drop up to 1.5 inches of rain in 10 minutes. A man's body is found pinned against a tree on the bank of a wash channel near Tioga Way in the Las Vegas Hilton Country Club golf course. A witness says the man had been sleeping under a bridge at Koval Lane before the deluge swept him away.

• Aug. 10, 1997: Flash floods in the Las Vegas Valley kill a man who is pushed under a parked vehicle by rushing water near Skyline Road and Tamarack Drive in Henderson. Cars are swept off roadways and heavy winds topple trees, while hail as big as quarters pelts the landscape. Floodwaters cut off access to Lake Mead National Recreation Area and Boulder City, and residents are evacuated from Stadium Mobile Home Park on Russell Road near Hollywood Boulevard. Some 9,000 residents are left without power. Officials from Boulder City and Henderson report \$5 million in flood damage. In all, 83 homes and 10 businesses are damaged.

• July 8, 1999: Within 90 minutes during the morning as much as 3 inches of rain falls in some parts of the Las Vegas Valley. Hundreds of homes and businesses are flooded, and two people die as a result. Traffic grinds to a standstill on Interstate 15, and parts of Boulder Highway are closed for a week while cleanup crews work. Two weeks after the 100-year flood, President Clinton declares Clark County a federal disaster area, providing relief to 363 local residences that suffered an estimated \$1.5 million in damage. County officials predict it will cost more than \$20 million to repair damage to roads and other public property.