

# TOP STORIES OF 2024: April Storms Had Many Struggling To Keep Heads Above Water

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A man wades through knee-high water and a vehicle is partially submerged in the middle of South Huron Street on Wheeling Island in April. Much of the south end of Wheeling Island was closed to traffic as the Ohio River neared major flooding levels when it reached its crest. (File Photo)

The first hit came in the first week of April. Rains pushed the Ohio River to a crest of 41.49 feet in Wheeling on April 5, the 26th highest crest in recorded history. And as residents were in the process of cleaning up from that flood, another set of storms sent the river climbing again.

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On April 13, the Ohio River crested in Wheeling at 37.8 feet, the 37th highest recorded crest.

During both flooding events, Wheeling Island residents took the brunt of the damage. The Ohio River came over its banks both times, flooding basements and garages and sending Island residents scrambling to save items from extensive damage.

If there was a silver lining, it was that those residents knew the drill. Wheeling Island is one of the first hit – and most hit – when the Ohio River floods. As the waters rose prior to the first flood, residents hurriedly pulled out furnace motors and hot water heaters to make sure they were safe.

Megan Hajdukovich and her family were moving items from her garage into a U-Haul truck that they would park on dry land until the waters subsided. They had learned from experience. The house she was living in had been part of the family since her grandparents built it in 1964.

“I mean, at least we know what to expect,” Hajdukovich said. “At least we’re not just going in, but it’s still a pain and disheartening every time we’ve got to do this.”

While Wheeling took it on the chin, the rest of the Ohio Valley was not immune to flood damage. Belmont County Emergency Management Director Dave Ivan told Belmont County Commissioners in late April that the cumulative damage to the county from both storms totaled \$15.7 million between water damage and washed-out roads.

“I was somewhat shocked with the number that came in from the PDA,” Ivan said.

The damage also wasn’t relegated to just flooding. The rains also led to multiple landslides that blocked roads and destroyed homes. One landslide covered most of W.Va. 2 at Gumby’s

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between downtown Wheeling and Warwood. That one was cleaned up relatively quickly, but others were much more troublesome.

A landslide destroyed a large chunk of Mt. Zion Cemetery in Mozart, toppling nearly 200 tombstones. The cemetery has received some help from the state in rebuilding, getting \$2 million in funds to get the job done.

Another landslide not only blocked Park View Road in the Springdale area, but also destroyed a home that was in its path. Residents and pets made it out of the home safely, but the home was rendered uninhabitable, and the road was impassable.

Months after the floodwaters receded, the region is still dealing with repairs from the storms. Wheeling's wastewater treatment plant will incur about \$4 million in repairs from the floods.