

# China reports ‘most severe’ heatwave and third driest summer on record

**Average temperature in August was 1.2C higher than norm, which caused widespread drought**



People sitting on a section of a parched river bed along the Yangtze River in Wuhan, China. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

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China recorded its highest temperatures and one of its lowest levels of rainfall in 61 years during a two-month summer heatwave that caused forest fires, damaged crops and hit power supplies, the national meteorological agency said.

The average national temperature in August, 22.4C, was 1.2C higher than the seasonal norm, while average rainfall fell 23% to 82mm, the third lowest since records began in 1961, according to Xiao Chan, the vice-director of China's national meteorological administration.

He told reporters that 267 weather stations across China recorded their highest temperatures in history last month.

The heatwave between mid-June to the end of August was the “most severe” since records began in terms of duration, extent, intensity and impact, said Xiao.

The extreme temperature caused widespread drought in regions along the Yangtze River, south-western China and east and central Tibet. The persistent heat and drought caused forest fires and affected agricultural production, water resources and power supply, Xiao said. The Yangtze is the world’s third largest river, providing drinking water to more than 400 million Chinese people, and is the most vital waterway to China’s economy.

Meanwhile, severe rainstorms hit various regions, including northern and southern China. Lightning, strong winds and hail hit 13 provinces and regions, including Inner Mongolia and Yunnan, in August.

The agency said it issued 65,000 weather alerts, mostly for extreme heat, in August – 26% up from the same month last year.

Officials told a press briefing they expected above-average temperatures to continue throughout September, and warned that fire prevention and strategic agricultural plans must be made to cope with the situation.

The meteorological administration last month deployed 75 flights of **cloud-seeding drones** to induce artificial rain over 1.45m sq km in southern China to alleviate the drought.

China has warned that extreme weather will probably persist in coming years as it tries to cope with the climate crisis and rising temperatures.

The record-breaking drought has caused some rivers in China – including parts of the Yangtze – to dry up, affecting hydropower, halting shipping and forcing major companies to suspend operations. The loss of water flow to China’s extensive hydropower system has sparked a “grave situation” in Sichuan, which gets more than 80% of its energy from hydropower.

Last month, the south-western province of Sichuan said it would **ration power supplies** to homes, offices and shopping malls, after having already ordered producers of energy-intensive metals and fertiliser to curb operations.