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Panama Canal reopens after rains

Transits and normal operations have resumed after heavy rains flooded nearby lakes forcing a 17-hour suspension of traffic



The Panama Canal reopened yesterday (Thursday 9 December) after closing for the first time since 1989 due to flooding after a 36-hour period of heavy rain, according to a [report](#) by MercoPress.

The facility, which handles 5 per cent of the world's maritime trade, was forced to suspend traffic through the canal when the downpours caused the Gatun and Alhajuela Lakes (that form part of canal) to swell to historic levels, the Panama Canal Authority (ACP) said in a statement.

The ACP explained that the temporary closure was necessary in order to open the Gatun and Madden floodgates and reduce the water level in one of the lakes.

"Transits and normal operations have resumed at the Panama Canal after historic rainfall temporarily suspended traffic – the temporary suspension was due to weather conditions in Panama City and along the Canal Watershed," said canal administrator and CEO Alberto Alemán Zubieta.

Though certain sections of the canal has been closed on several occasions due to temporary blocks caused by accidents, MercoPress said this is the first time in more than 20 years that the entire canal has been closed to ships since the US military intervention in Panama during 1989.

Most of Central America as well as several Latin American nations including Colombia and Venezuela have experienced the heaviest rains in decades this year, resulting in severe floods and mudslides across the region.

Some 40 ships pass through the Panama Canal on a daily basis, making one of the busiest waterways for global trade, according to MercoPress.