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## Storms Disrupt Southern England as Heavy Rain and Flood Alerts Issued

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Severe thunderstorms and heavy rainfall struck southern England on Thursday, prompting a yellow weather warning from the Met Office and raising the risk of flash flooding, power outages, and travel disruption across several counties. Rainfall rates of up to 35mm in an hour and totals reaching 60mm over a few hours were forecast, with the warning covering areas including London, Kent, Bristol, Oxford, Southampton, and Ipswich until 9pm.

The Met Office cautioned that the intense downpours could bring hail and lightning, with a small risk of rapid flooding to homes and businesses. Forecasters also warned of difficult

driving conditions, public transport delays, and a slight chance of power cuts due to the unstable weather pattern. The storms, which originated in the west, moved steadily eastward throughout the day.

Met Office spokesman Stephen Dixon said that the nature of thunderstorms means rainfall amounts will vary widely across the warning zone. “Some areas will see significantly less in the way of rainfall,” he noted, “but where you do see those heavier bursts, there’s the potential for some impacts which has resulted in that warning.”

One flood alert was issued by the Environment Agency (EA) for the River Cole in Swindon, where rising water levels may affect low-lying roads and land, particularly in the Lower Stratton area. The downpour also interrupted the fifth cricket Test match between England and India at The Oval in London during the afternoon.

Temperatures in parts of the South could still reach up to 27°C, though cloud cover and storm activity mean it may feel cooler. Elsewhere across the UK, conditions remained largely cloudy with scattered showers reported in south-western and south-eastern Scotland.

Mr Dixon described the weather situation as a “messy meteorological set-up” and advised the public to stay alert for further warnings. He added that while the risk of thunderstorms would ease overnight, more unsettled conditions are expected early next week, with a potential for “unseasonably wet and windy weather” on Monday.

The outlook for Friday includes morning showers easing later in the day, with heavier rainfall likely in central and eastern England. Saturday is forecast to be dry and fine for most, although not particularly warm. By Sunday, further rain is expected to move across the country from west to east.

Drivers were urged to exercise caution, with RAC spokeswoman Alice Simpson warning that severe weather could cause traffic delays from Bath to Kent during the evening commute. She advised motorists not to attempt driving through floodwater due to risks of vehicle damage and aquaplaning, which can lead to loss of vehicle control.

The public is encouraged to monitor official weather updates and travel advisories throughout the remainder of the week.