

[Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / Explained: Why was the Emilia Romagna GP cancelled?

This weekend's Emilia Romano-Granpre in Imola is off.

Our reporter Craig Slater joins us now.

So what can you tell us about this?

Decisive, and I think principled action by Formula One and its president Stefano Domenicali to call off this Grand Prix.

It's been a fluid situation, a fast-moving situation, but ultimately he's decided, after consulting with the local authorities in that part of Italy, that it is not safe to go ahead with this Grand Prix weekend, that the river scuts the track there.

It's unusually high for this time of year.

And in terms of safety for Formula One's personnel, for any fans which might attend the event, and particularly I think F1 mindful that if they went ahead with this Grand Prix, what extra burden would it put on the local authority, on the emergency services, and do they really want to do that at this time of year?

So they've said it is the right and responsible thing to do not hold the event, given the situation faced by the towns and cities of the region, it would not be right to put further pressure on the emergency services at what is a difficult time.

Yeah, absolutely.

So then Craig, what will happen now?

Could the race still be rescheduled?

My understanding is almost certainly there is no place on the calendar for this year to slot this Emilia-Romagna-Grand Prix back in.

It was never an option, for example, to wait towards the end of this week and maybe hold the race on Monday because Monaco is coming hard on the heels of it.

The potential dates that they could maybe find to reschedule, well, you'd have to eat into Formula One's summer break and there isn't any appetite to do that if they were to try and put it on in the autumn, in which it has, they have held a race at this venue in the past then.

You'd be looking at four or five Grand Prix consecutively, which is an enormous burden on all the personnel there.

Incidentally, the teams still can't go to the track today

[Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / Explained: Why was the Emilia Romagna GP cancelled?

to recover their kit, to take the cars away.
Remember, they were told to leave the circuit yesterday
and weren't allowed in this morning
while all these decisions were being taken.
So they're all on the same boat in that regard,
but there's still, you know, it's going to be maybe some time
before they can all get back in and take down the garage,
and get the cars ready to be transported to Monte Carlo.
And you've been in contact with some of the teams, haven't you?
What's their reaction been like?
They all fully back what Formula One have done on this.
They all understand that there's more to life than motorsport.
And we have to remember, this is a tragedy for this part of Italy.
Three people have lost their lives in these deadly floods.
5,000 people have had to move from their homes.
The Mercedes team have released this statement in the last few minutes.
They've said the Mercedes Formula One team fully supports the decision
by Formula One, the FIA, the race promoters and local authorities
to not proceed with the Grand Prix weekend.
The safety of people in the Emilia-Romagna region must take priority
alongside allowing local authorities and emergency services
to continue their vital work helping those in need.
Our thoughts are with the victims, families and communities
who have been affected by the flooding in the region.
Formula One historically has often taken criticism
by being a little bit deaf to what's going on around it.
I think this is another example that they're very much aware
that there is a bigger picture, particularly in a place like this.
The Ferrari factory is only 50 miles away from the Emilia circuit.
Alpha Tauri are based nearby
and have had to move some of their stuff out of flooded areas.
So I think they're sensitive to that.
It's the Fano Domenicali, the F1 president's hometown as well.
So I think this has been felt very deeply
and I think it's good to see that the action has been taken quickly enough
that it will make a difference.
Yeah, absolutely. Craig, thanks ever so much for the update.
To get more on this, we can speak to our F1 reporter, Rachel Brooks,
who is in Bologna. Rachel, really good to have you with us.
What's your experience been like there, like many involved in F1?
Are you flying back almost as soon as you've actually arrived in Italy?
We are indeed. I'm actually standing in Bologna at the moment.
We arrived at about 11 o'clock local time this morning

[Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / Explained: Why was the Emilia Romagna GP cancelled?

at the Terno tope in the UK.

And we touched down.

We came in, actually, as we flew into the airport.

We could see how much flooding there was in the region.

And then we waited for a car and we flew about 15 minutes outside of the airport on the motorway when we hit some stationary traffic.

And while we were sitting in the stationary traffic, an emergency vehicle passed us and two of those were actually towing ribs for rigid inflatable boats that you often see in these situations and rescuing people from their homes.

And I think it was at that moment we realised just how bad the situation was in this region.

And there was no way that they could go ahead.

The authorities were trying to include everything they can by everyone in this region right now.

And they don't need to have to worry about a Formula One race down the road and servicing that as well.

So it was absolutely the right decision.

But as we drove off this way, we could see how high the water was.

One of the rivers was not far from the motorway as we fell along it.

And actually, we started at the motorway.

Friends of ours, people are already out here in the race.

We came across the picture in the social media of the motorway actually being flooded itself.

So I've said they've got to have seen so much water to me.

And it's no surprise that we have to pull it off.

It's completely the right decision.

And we just hope everyone in the area can get to some safety.

And we know that the servicers here are working as hard as they possibly can right now.

Some pictures of the flooding as well in the area, Rachel.

From your perspective, just how severe is it?

Is this like anything you've ever seen before?

It's not. It's absolutely not.

I mean, we was bad at this because, yes, the experience with our crew, our technical crew, and our crew tried out earlier than us.

They arrived yesterday morning and they flipped the track and started to use the process of setting up for the race again.

So it became evident really, really quickly to them that this was not like any road you've seen in a race circuit before.

And around three o'clock yesterday afternoon, they were all told to leave the circuit just for safety concerns.

[Transcript] Sky Sports F1 Podcast / Explained: Why was the Emilia Romagna GP cancelled?

They wanted to make sure everyone was safe.
The river at the level was arriving at that point.
And they knew there was a lot more rain coming.
Drebbel was told to leave the circuit and go back to their hotels.
They were told to stay there last night,
not come into the circuit today until further notice.
And then this morning, another notice went out saying,
don't come to the track today.
We will update you at one o'clock.
But before that update at one o'clock, we started to hear that,
you know, ministers in the region were saying,
we cannot hold a race this weekend.
We need our services elsewhere.
And that's when, quite rightly, it was called off.
So now it's a waiting game, actually.
The F-1 teams have still been arriving
as we've been sat here at the airport.
We've seen F-1 teams arrive, Drebbel arrive,
and we've explained to them the situation we found
on the motorway where we actually had to turn back
and find a slip road and come back
because traffic is just blocked.
It's not moving anywhere.
But there are people now, obviously,
sitting waiting to go in and pack up everything
and get it to Monaco.
This is the first race in a triple header for Formula One.
And this kit needs to get to Monaco for next week's race.
So a lot of people are sitting in hotels right now,
waiting until the rain stops, for one thing,
and two, to have to get in to try and drive this out,
pack it up and send it on to Monaco.
But everybody's thoughts right now,
you only need to look out of your window,
everyone's thoughts on the people of the region
and the emergency services right now,
just working non-stop flat out to try and help everybody
and just get everybody to safety, basically.
Yeah, absolutely the right thing to do.
Rachel, thanks so much for joining us.