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Extreme weather

The heatwave that did not break Europe's automotive logistics, but changed the risk outlook

The impact of one heatwave may be limited, but the broader trend is clear: extreme weather is becoming a strategic consideration for automotive logistics providers and manufacturers alike.

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June 2026 was the warmest June on record for western Europe, according to the Copernicus Climate Change Service Unsplash

Europe's automotive supply chains have largely weathered this summer's crushing heatwave, avoiding the major production disruptions that some had feared. Yet low river levels, rail restrictions, wildfire-related transport disruptions and growing pressure on logistics workers showed how increasingly frequent climate extremes are becoming a strategic risk.

Europe was nearly brought to a standstill by one of the most intense heatwaves in decades this year. As temperatures soared above 40°C in parts of Spain, France and Italy, infrastructure across much of the continent was pushed to its limits. The relentless heat killed people, sparked some of the continent's most destructive wildfires in years and

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Transport and logistics systems were among the first and most visible casualties of Europe's heatwave, according to a report by UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) published in June. Among other things, the organisation rang an alarm bell over heat-related train delays or cancellations in many countries, including Belgium, Denmark, France and the United Kingdom.

UNECE warned that extreme heat was triggering a range of transport disruptions, from buckling asphalt, rail deformation and failures of onboard air-conditioning systems to river navigation bottlenecks, malfunctioning traffic lights and overheating or melting of cables and signalling equipment. The organisation also highlighted speed restrictions imposed to reduce stress on tracks expanded by high temperatures.

Automotive logistics absorbs the shock

Despite widespread disruption across transport networks, Europe's automotive logistics industry has so far absorbed the impact of the heatwave without suffering lasting damage.

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ECG's General Assembly and Spring Congress 2026 saw FVL experts highlight trends and challenges, including shifting trade routes and capacity concerns.

"Extreme weather events can clearly have a temporary and regional impact on automotive logistics like lower river levels and rail restrictions," commented Frank Schnelle, executive director of the Association of European Vehicle Logistics (ECG). "However, it is very difficult to draw a direct line between one individual heatwave and specific effects across the European automotive logistics sector as a whole."

Logistics providers say that the impact of the 2026 summer heatwave has been rather limited.

"The current heatwave has not had any significant impact on our logistics operations so far," commented Axel Bantel, managing director and global director of sales for the automobile division of BLG Logistics.

In particular, Bantel said, the company has not experienced any notable disruptions in its port operations.

"In rail freight transport, heat-related disruptions can occasionally occur, for example due to technical issues affecting locomotives or trackside vegetation fires," Bantel added. "These affect a mode of transport that is already under pressure from infrastructure works and ongoing staff shortages".

In general, observers have noted that different transport modes are being affected to a different extent.

Low river levels are one of the clearest examples of how heatwaves can affect automotive logistics, Nandini Roy Choudhury, senior analyst Future Market Insights – a consultancy – commented.

Read more: DP World chosen to operate new Czech logistics facility for BMW Group

On February 5 2026, global logistics company DP World announced it had been selected by BMW Group to manage a new logistics facility in Ostrava, Czech Republic.

"In July, sections of the Danube in Romania fell to their lowest levels since 1996, disrupting shipping and leaving some barges unable to operate normally," Choudhury said. "Although automotive components are not always transported directly by river, the disruption affects fuels, chemicals, metals and other industrial inputs used throughout the automotive value chain".

DP World also managed to avoid any negative consequences of the recent weather extremes, according to Adal Mirza, DP World vice president.

"Our P&T operations in Europe continued to run without material disruption during the recent heatwave," Mirza said.

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with resilience in mind, with teams following hot-weather protocols that include enhanced equipment monitoring, adjusted working patterns, and additional hydration and safety measures for employees.

Heat raises the stakes

While the heatwave did not trigger any immediate high-profile disruptions, it did not come without cost for European automotive logistics providers.

"While we haven't seen the heatwave fundamentally change demand for our services, we have seen periods of extreme weather increase the operational complexity of time-critical logistics," commented Emma Cooper, group head of marketing with Priority Freight.

Cooper explained that high temperatures can affect transport networks in several ways, from road restrictions and infrastructure disruption to increased pressure on vehicles and drivers. When combined with congestion or other supply chain challenges, these factors can make it more difficult for manufacturers to keep production running as planned.

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leaders in Bonn and what emerged was a clear and increasingly confident argument that the companies investing in collaboration, technology and talent are building competitive advantage from uncertainty.

Extreme heat is becoming the latest addition to a growing list of disruptions that logistics providers must account for.

"More broadly, we're seeing customers place greater emphasis on supply chain resilience," Cooper said. "Whether the disruption is caused by extreme weather, geopolitical events or other unforeseen circumstances, businesses increasingly need logistics partners that can react quickly, identify alternative solutions and keep critical shipments moving".

In general, climate change is turning extreme-weather disruption from an occasional operational exception into a recurring supply-chain planning consideration, Choudhury said.

"Automotive companies will increasingly need multimodal alternatives, additional inventory buffers for critical components, heat-resilient warehouses and vehicle compounds, stronger supplier-continuity plans and greater visibility beyond their immediate tier one suppliers," Choudhury added.

Beyond the immediate operational challenges posed by extreme heat, shifting weather patterns are creating longer-term risks that investors and industrial companies will need to factor into their decisions today, according to Dr Pal Negyesi, managing director of CE Auto, a Vienna-based automotive industry consultancy.

Read more: Mercedes-Benz strengthens local-for-local strategy with opening of plant extension in Kecskemét, Hungary

Parts and batteries are assembled on site at Mercedes-Benz's newly extended Kecskemét plant in Hungary, supporting its local-for-local strategy while improving flexibility and resilience.

Hungary provides a stark example of this challenge. The country is becoming increasingly dry, with some areas facing the prospect of desertification in the coming decades, while

"One of the key challenges for Hungary's next government will be balancing industrial development with the need to secure reliable supplies of clean water for communities and ensure that battery plants can continue operating without interruptions," Negyesi said.

Negyesi added that the issue has already affected industrial activity, with operations at the Semcorp plant in Debrecen suspended following environmental violations.

The challenge for automotive logistics is not the impact of one heatwave, but what it signals about the future. As weather changes, industry players will need to adapt to a new operating environment in which climate-related disruptions are no longer rare exceptions but recurring supply chain risks, market players believe.

"The central concern is not simply whether one heatwave reduces European vehicle production in a particular month," Choudhury said. "It is that repeated heatwaves, droughts, floods and wildfires can gradually make automotive logistics less predictable, more expensive and more difficult to operate under traditional lean and just-in-time models".

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