

Real-Time Flash Flood Prediction System Using Artificial Intelligence (AI) Based on Sensor and Terrain Data

Abstract

Flash floods can be extremely destructive and are hard to forecast precisely especially in mountainous areas. This paper proposes an artificial intelligence-based early warning system that uses real-time data from Internet of Things Sensor data alongside digital elevation models (DEM) for risk reduction. Essential environmental factors - rainfall, soil moisture, water and stream height, flow rate, and the slope on the terrain - are obtained via high-risk zones and processed using LSTM and Random Forest models. The system provides approximate predictions of up to 85% accuracy from 30 minutes up to 2 hours prior to a flash flood event. What's special is this system can "self-learn" from continuously integrating new data and the ability to notify alerts via mobile apps and dashboards to local communities.

Therefore, this paper will present the suggested approach to using AI and IoT for disaster prevention; especially to developing countries with complex terrains such as Vietnam.

Keywords: Flash floods, early warning, AI, IoT sensors, DEM terrain, machine learning, LSTM, Random Forest, environmental monitoring, prediction accuracy, self-learning, disaster prevention.

I. Introduction

Flash floods are abrupt, damaging events that imperil people, property, and livelihoods, particularly in mountainous and developing areas. This project places forward a system for real-time flash flood prediction using Artificial Intelligence (AI), using data from IoT sensors, together with digital elevation models, to improve warning time and accuracy. Unlike conventional threshold forecasting that is based on fixed thresholds, the system learns continuously from the salutation of

new environment data to generate risk maps and notify users through mobile applications and SMS, especially for local emergency management and vulnerable users, e.g. communities in regions like the Mekong Delta in Vietnam.

The project's intention is to build more than just a system, but to emphasise community resilience where threats from floods increase with climate change, evident in southern and south-east Asian regions. Adaptive systems and data driven decision making should become more pervasive. This project should serve as a prototype for using AI

with operational systems and ease of use location-based smart-device technology for disaster mitigation and management, which may be replicated for similar hazards like landslides. The AI system, underpinned by local sensor data, can provide real-time location-based information, enabling time sensitive action. It represents commitment to a more equitable and proactive approach to climate adaptation, as opportunities arise in underserved communities.

II. Methodology

This research is grounded in three main fields: environmental science, artificial intelligence, and geospatial data analysis.

Environmental Science: A solid understanding of hydrology and meteorology is essential to grasp how flash floods occur and behave. These floods usually result from heavy rainfall in a short time, influenced by factors such as landforms, soil moisture, and drainage conditions. This study relies on environmental science principles to identify key indicators that may signal upcoming flood events. Knowledge about watershed behavior, runoff, and rainfall patterns helps guide the choice and setup of sensors used in the system.

Artificial Intelligence: Artificial intelligence plays a vital role in converting raw environmental data into useful flood predictions. Machine learning methods, especially supervised learning and time

series techniques, allow the system to detect early signs of flooding. By training models on past flood records combined with live sensor data, the system continually refines its prediction ability. These AI models can uncover complex patterns and relationships that simpler methods might miss, providing a more flexible and responsive forecasting approach.

Geospatial Data Analysis: Understanding how water moves across different terrains requires detailed spatial information. Tools like Digital Elevation Models (DEMs) and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) help map flood paths and areas at risk. By incorporating geospatial analysis, the system can simulate flood spread, identify vulnerable spots, and issue targeted alerts. This spatial perspective improves prediction accuracy, especially in regions with varied landscapes such as mountains or hills.

By integrating these three fields, the research offers a real-time, data-driven solution that not only improves flash flood prediction accuracy but also delivers location-specific warnings. This interdisciplinary method ensures the system is both scientifically reliable and practically effective for real-world disaster management.

2.1 Application Development

To develop a reliable and scalable real-time flood prediction system, this research uses a technology setup designed for collecting, processing, and

showing data. The development is divided into three main parts: gathering data, processing information, and user interface.

Data Collection: A network of environmental sensors is set up to gather real-time information such as rainfall, water levels, soil moisture, and air pressure. These sensors are placed in areas known to be at risk of flash floods. The data collected is sent to a central server using common communication methods like MQTT or HTTP. In addition, terrain information is obtained from public sources such as NASA's SRTM and local geographic surveys.

Data Processing: The system's backend is built with Python, which supports many tools for analyzing data. Past flood records and current sensor readings are used to help forecast possible flash floods. The system uses various methods to find patterns that could indicate danger, including decision trees and other analysis techniques. It also looks for unusual changes in the environment.

Mapping and Risk Analysis: Terrain data is studied using mapping tools, and elevation information is processed with software that handles geographic data. This helps create maps that show flood-prone areas and assess risks downstream. The results from the data analysis are combined with terrain features to provide clear and useful forecasts.

User Interface: The front-end application is built with React.js to provide an easy-to-use and interactive experience. It shows live sensor data, alerts for possible floods, and updated risk maps. Both officials and local residents get notifications through websites and mobile apps to stay informed and respond quickly.

2.2 Features and Functionalities

Real-Time Sensor Data Monitoring: The system gathers continuous data from environmental sensors placed in vulnerable areas, measuring rainfall, water levels, soil moisture, and air pressure. This allows users, including local officials and researchers, to keep track of environmental changes promptly and with accuracy.

Automated Warning System: When certain risk levels are reached, the platform automatically sends out alerts via SMS, mobile notifications, or email to community members and authorities. This ensures timely awareness so that appropriate actions can be taken to reduce potential harm.

Model Training and Improvement: The system regularly reviews past flood events and compares predictions with actual outcomes to refine its forecasting approach. This process helps the system adjust over time to better suit local weather patterns and conditions.

Flash Flood Risk Mapping: Within the application, a dynamic map displays areas categorized by

different levels of flood risk based on recent and historical data. This visualization supports users in identifying high-risk zones and making informed decisions about evacuation or response.

Device Status and Alert Management: A dashboard provides real-time monitoring of all sensor and alert devices, showing connectivity status, battery levels, and data reporting intervals. This helps administrators keep devices functioning smoothly and ensures continuous monitoring.

Data Visualization and Analytics Dashboard: The system offers interactive charts and graphs to present key environmental data trends over time. Users can observe rainfall patterns, water level changes, and other important measurements to better understand flood behavior.

Predictive Report Generation: The platform automatically generates regular reports summarizing environmental conditions, notable events, prediction results, and response activities. These reports assist authorities in evaluating system performance and planning improvements for flood preparedness.

2.3 Target Users

- **Disaster Management Experts:** Use real-time data and system-generated insights to assess flood risk levels, review prediction accuracy, and support planning for effective disaster response.

- **Local Authorities and Emergency Services:** Receive timely alerts and risk maps to organize evacuation efforts, manage resources, and communicate safety instructions to the public.
- **Community Residents:** Get early warning messages and access visual flood risk maps to stay informed and take necessary precautions during emergencies.
- **Environmental Researchers and Technicians:** Track sensor data, study environmental patterns, and help improve forecasting methods to enhance long-term flood preparedness.

2.4 Benefits

Early Risk Detection: The system monitors data from sensors and the landscape to notice early signs of possible flash floods.

Improved Response Readiness: Warning messages and risk maps give local officials and people timely information so they can act quickly and safely.

Ongoing Model Improvement: After each event, collected data and reviews help make future predictions more reliable.

III. System Architecture

3.1 User Interface Design

- The system includes several main pages, each designed for a specific purpose. The Dashboard page lets users see live sensor data like rainfall, water levels, and soil moisture. It's laid out clearly and simply, with status indicators and maps to help people quickly understand what's going on.
- The Alert Monitoring page shows ongoing flood alerts, risk levels, and the areas likely to be affected. Users can also check past notifications whenever they want.
- On the Risk Map page, GIS data and AI predictions combine to highlight flood-prone zones on an interactive map. This tool is helpful both for experts and the general public, enabling quick decision-making.
- The Device Management page lets administrators keep track of sensor status, connectivity, and maintenance records. They can add new sensors or spot offline devices for prompt checks.
- Lastly, the Model Training page is for authorized experts to update and improve AI models using fresh data. They can review results, compare versions, and retrain models to boost prediction accuracy.

3.2 Data Flow

The system is constructed on a multi-layered architecture that integrates sensor data acquisition, backend data processing, AI-based analysis, and user interaction. The process initiates with field-deployed sensors that continuously monitor rainfall, river levels, and other environmental parameters.

These sensors transmit real-time data to a centralized server via secure communication protocols. On the backend, a Python-based platform ingests the data stream, performs data validation, and stores it within a time-series optimized database. This architecture ensures efficient handling of both historical and real-time environmental datasets.

Subsequently, the AI module processes the validated data using machine learning algorithms trained on historical flood events and terrain characteristics. These models analyze both current and archived data to compute risk scores and generate predictions for potential flash flood events. Forecasts are updated continuously as new data becomes available.

The outputs are visualized through dynamic dashboards and geospatially interactive maps within the user interface. Furthermore, the system automatically disseminates alerts through SMS, mobile app notifications, and email when predefined risk thresholds are met or specific regions are affected.

This seamless and automated information pipeline ensures timely and reliable flood warnings, empowering both communities and local authorities to respond proactively and mitigate disaster impacts.

IV. Results and discussion

4.1 Key Outcomes

- **Real-Time Monitoring:** The system gathers and presents sensor data like rainfall, water levels, and soil moisture instantly, helping authorities quickly understand the current situation.
- **AI-Based Flood Prediction:** By training AI models on terrain and sensor information, the system delivers accurate flash flood risk forecasts, supporting timely early warnings.
- **Risk Visualization:** Flood risk maps provide clear visuals of vulnerable zones for both residents and officials, encouraging early actions and evacuations when needed.
- **Device Status Management:** Continuous monitoring of sensor health ensures the system remains dependable, even under challenging weather conditions.

4.2 Challenges

- Sometimes in remote places, the network is weak or unstable, so data from sensors doesn't come through smoothly. Because of that, the system needs backup options, like saving data temporarily on-site or using different ways to send data.
- The AI models have to be updated all the time with new info to keep them working right. This needs good computers and a proper way to test the models carefully. It can't be rushed or skipped.
- Terrain and weather change a lot from place to place, so one model doesn't fit all areas. It's better to make different models for different regions to get better flood warnings.

V. Scalability and Future Directions

- **Expanded Monitoring Coverage:** Set up more sensor stations in areas with higher flood risks that aren't yet covered, especially in mountainous and midland regions.
- **Automated AI Model Upgrades:** Use continuous learning methods so the AI can update itself with new data gradually, without needing to be retrained from scratch.

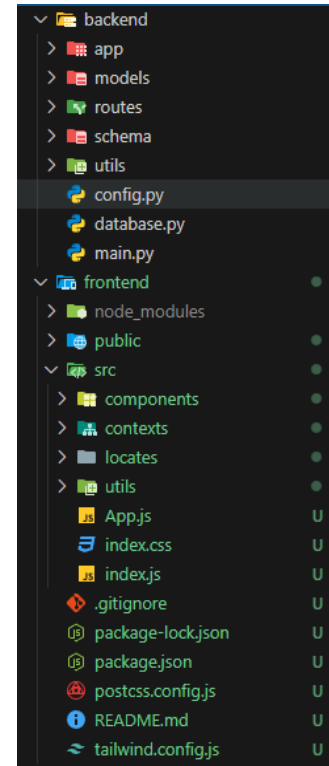
- **Integration with National Warning Systems:** Link the system to disaster prevention agencies' databases and platforms to ensure warnings and responses are coordinated.
- **Mobile Application for Citizens:** Create a mobile app that sends early alerts, shows risk maps, and offers guidance for evacuation directly to people.

VI. Conclusion

This research illustrates the potential for Artificial Intelligence for flash flood risk management in highly vulnerable parts of Vietnam, such as the Mekong Delta and Central Highlands. The system works through a combination of real-time sensor monitoring, dynamically created terrain mapping, and continuous machine learning to provide accurate daily and hourly reports. The user interface is developed for authorities and communities at risk. Further work will develop a larger sensor scope, a national level of coordination, and adaptation learning. This significantly strengthens preparedness for flooding, and promotes long-term climate resilience, through enhanced data generation and evaluation of risks for disaster management.

VII. Appendices

7.1 Structure of the project



The project structure consists of two main parts: backend and frontend. The backend is implemented in Python, containing directories such as models, routes, schema, and utils, along with key configuration files like config.py, database.py, and main.py, which handle API processing and data connectivity. The frontend is organized within the src directory and includes React components such as components, contexts, and utils, as well as initialization files like App.js and index.js. Additionally, the project uses Tailwind CSS (tailwind.config.js) for UI customization and includes essential Node.js configuration files such as package.json.

backend/

- This folder contains the server-side part of the flash flood forecasting system.

- It's responsible for collecting and processing sensor data, running AI prediction models, managing the database, and providing API endpoints for the frontend.
- Basically, this is where the main data analysis and flood risk calculations happen.

frontend/

- This folder holds the client-side code of the application.
- Its main job is to build the user interface so experts, local authorities, and residents can view real-time sensor data, flood risk maps, alerts, and reports.
- The frontend talks to the backend to fetch data and update notifications, making sure users get timely and clear information.

Inside the frontend folder, the main file is usually `App.js` (or `main.js` depending on the framework). This file handles:

- Navigation between screens like the dashboard, maps, device status, and alerts.
- Dynamic UI components such as charts, interactive maps, and alert banners.
- Managing the app's state and context, including user roles and real-time updates.

Training AI model

```
import pandas as pd
from xgboost import XGBClassifier
from sklearn.model_selection import train_test_split
from sklearn.metrics import classification_report

df = pd.read_csv("/data/data.csv")
X = df.drop("flood_risk", axis=1)
y = df["flood_risk"]

X_train, X_test, y_train, y_test = train_test_split(X, y, test_size=0.2, random_state=42)

model = XGBClassifier(use_label_encoder=False, eval_metric='logloss')
model.fit(X_train, y_train)

y_pred = model.predict(X_test)
report = classification_report(y_test, y_pred, output_dict=True)
df_report = pd.DataFrame(report).transpose()

import joblib
joblib.dump(model, "/data/flash_flood_xgb_model.pkl")
```

The script demonstrates a machine learning pipeline for flash flood risk prediction using the XGBoost algorithm. It begins by loading and pre-processing the dataset, separating the target variable (`flood_risk`) from the feature set. The data is partitioned into training and testing subsets using a controlled random split. An `XGBClassifier` model is instantiated with specific parameters and trained on the training data. Performance is evaluated on the test set via a classification report, which is formatted into a transposed `DataFrame` for readability. The trained model is then serialized and saved using `joblib` for future deployment.

7.2 Main interfaces

7.2.1 Login page

The login interface is simple, consisting of two input fields: Email and Password, with a “Login” button below to confirm.

This helps people focus on places that may need attention.

The map uses simple circles—red for high risk and yellow for medium risk—to highlight important spots. This makes it easier to see where floods might happen and where to take action.

7.2.4. Sensor & Alert Device Management Page

Sensor & Alert Device Management				
Device Name	Code	Status	Coordinates	Relative Address
Sensor Station 01	CB-001	Stable	21.020511, 105.804817	1.2km from Nhut Tan Bridge, Dong Anh, Hanoi
Sensor Station 02	CB-002	Needs Maintenance	21.030237, 105.812345	Near Dong Anh High School, Hanoi
Alert Station 01	CB-ALERT-01	Stable	21.030123, 105.800456	300m from Hai Ba Commune People's Committee
Sensor Station 03	CB-003	Stable	21.032111, 105.80889	Near Hai Ba Market, Dong Anh
Sensor Station 04	CB-004	Needs Maintenance	21.029876, 105.810234	Near to Hai Ba Primary School
Alert Station 02	CB-ALERT-02	Stable	21.027654, 105.80678	At the head of Dong Tho Bridge
Sensor Station 05	CB-005	Stable	21.033456, 105.813456	Near Gia Hamlet Cultural House
Sensor Station 06	CB-006	Needs Maintenance	21.034567, 105.814567	Near to Hai Ba Commune Health Station
Alert Station 03	CB-ALERT-03	Stable	21.031234, 105.809876	200 Road Intersection
Sensor Station 07	CB-007	Stable	21.035678, 105.815678	Near Vinh Ngai Commune People's Committee
Sensor Station 08	CB-008	Needs Maintenance	21.037890, 105.817890	Near to Vinh Ngai Kindergarten
Alert Station 04	CB-ALERT-04	Stable	21.038901, 105.818901	At the head of Vinh Thanh Bridge
Sensor Station 09	CB-009	Stable	21.039012, 105.819012	Near Vinh Thanh Market
Sensor Station 10	CB-010	Needs Maintenance	21.040123, 105.820123	Near to Vinh Thanh Primary School
Alert Station 05	CB-ALERT-05	Stable	21.041234, 105.821234	Extended Road Intersection
Sensor Station 11	CB-011	Stable	21.042345, 105.822345	Near Cu Dien Hamlet Cultural House
Sensor Station 12	CB-012	Needs Maintenance	21.043456, 105.823456	Near to Cu Dien Commune Health Station
Alert Station 06	CB-ALERT-06	Stable	21.044567, 105.824567	South end of Nhut Tan Bridge
Sensor Station 13	CB-013	Stable	21.045678, 105.825678	Near Hai Ba Secondary School
Sensor Station 14	CB-014	Needs Maintenance	21.046789, 105.826789	Near to Dong Hamlet Cultural House

The sensor and alert device management screen provides users with a detailed list of monitoring devices deployed in a specific area. It shows device names, identification codes, current status, location coordinates, and nearby address references. This information allows users to keep track of the operational state of sensor stations and alert systems, such as Sensor Station 01 and Alert Station 01, and organize maintenance activities efficiently.

Along with its main function, the screen updates device statuses in real time, helping users quickly identify which devices are functioning properly and which ones need attention. For instance, Sensor Station 02 may appear with a status of "Needs

Maintenance." This feature supports prioritizing maintenance tasks to ensure continuous monitoring of critical locations like Dong Anh, Hanoi, by using precise coordinates and familiar local landmarks.

Once users review the device information, they can evaluate the condition of each unit and schedule necessary repairs or maintenance. Color-coded indicators (green for stable, yellow for needs maintenance) clearly highlight device health, allowing users to maintain a well-functioning network of sensors and alerts for effective environmental monitoring.

7.2.5 Dashboard page

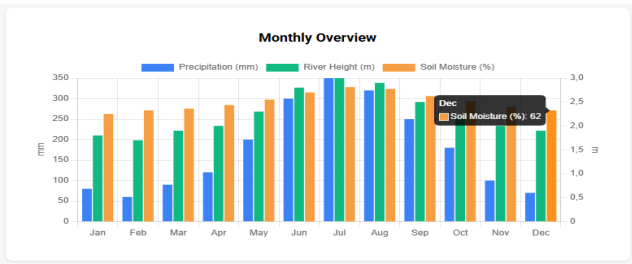


The daily overview screen shows a simple summary of environmental data collected over a few days. It uses a line graph to plot rainfall (mm), river height (m), and soil moisture (%) from June 1st through June 7th. This makes it easy for users to see how these measurements go up and down over time.

Apart from its main use, the screen also lets users look at how these factors relate to each other. For

example, it helps spot when heavy rainfall is followed by a rise in river level, giving a clearer picture of how the environment changes and where flood risks might lie.

When reviewing the data, users can notice daily patterns, like the highest points of rainfall and river height around June 4th. The graph uses different colors to highlight these values, and there’s an extra axis for the river height, so users get a quick idea of what’s happening, helping them decide on the best way to monitor or respond.

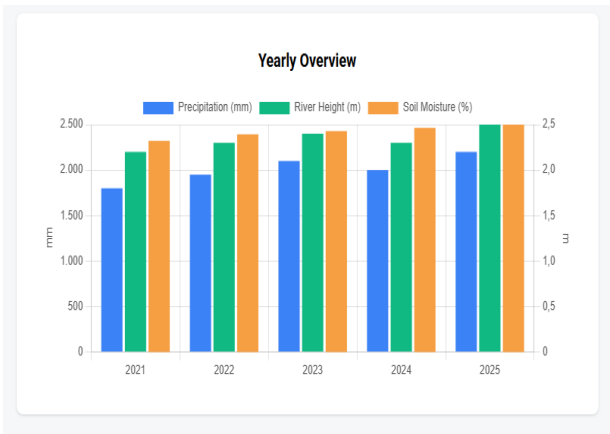


The monthly overview screen offers users a detailed summary of environmental trends throughout the year. It presents a bar chart tracking three main measurements—rainfall (mm), river height (m), and soil moisture (%)—for each month from January to December. Blue bars show rainfall, green bars represent river height, and orange bars indicate soil moisture, making it straightforward to spot seasonal changes and shifts.

Beyond its basic function, the screen allows users to dig deeper by comparing how these factors change over the months. For instance, the chart highlights a clear peak in rainfall and river height

during July and August, with rainfall around 350 mm and river height reaching close to 2.5 m. This points to a higher flood risk during the monsoon season. Meanwhile, soil moisture stays mostly steady, with a noticeable level of 62% in December, hinting at possible saturation issues near year-end. This helps users identify key times to focus on for flood prevention planning.

Once the data is reviewed, users can examine monthly patterns and what they mean for managing the environment. The system calls attention to big differences, like the low rainfall and river height in January and February—about 50 mm and 1.0 m—contrasting sharply with the higher mid-year numbers. This gives a clear picture of seasonal cycles and supports making informed choices around resource use, alert systems, or infrastructure updates to better handle flood risks year-round.



The yearly overview screen offers users a broad summary of environmental data trends spanning several years. It features a bar chart displaying precipitation (mm), river height (m), and soil moisture

(%) from 2021 to 2025. Blue bars indicate precipitation, green bars show river height, and orange bars represent soil moisture, helping users to clearly observe long-term changes and patterns.

Beyond its basic function, the screen allows users to compare data across years, making it easier to spot trends or unusual shifts. For example, river height shows a marked rise in 2025, reaching about 2.5 m, compared to roughly 2.0 m in earlier years, while precipitation remains steady around 2000 mm each year. Soil moisture stays consistent as well, with slight peaks near 2.5% in 2023 and 2025, suggesting stable soil conditions over time. This helps users identify gradual changes—like rising river levels—that could signal greater flood risk, supporting strategic planning efforts.

After reviewing the data, users can evaluate annual trends and what they mean for managing the environment. The system draws attention to notable shifts, such as the higher river levels in 2025 alongside steady precipitation and soil moisture, offering timely insight into potential flood hazards. This supports informed choices regarding long-term flood mitigation, infrastructure updates, or policy changes to better handle evolving environmental challenges.

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