

# WILDFIRE FACT SHEET

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A wildfire is an uncontrolled fire often occurring in wildland areas, but which can also consume houses or agricultural resources. Common causes include lightning, human carelessness, arson, volcano eruption, and pyroclastic cloud from active volcano. Heat waves, droughts, and cyclical climate changes such as El Niño can also have a dramatic effect on the risk of wildfires.

Wildfires are common in many places around the world, including much of the vegetated areas of Australia and the Western Cape of South Africa. The forested areas of the United States and Canada are also susceptible to wildfires. Fires are particularly prevalent in the summer and fall, and during droughts when fallen branches, leaves, and other material can dry out and become highly flammable.

Some suggest that global warming has been increasing the intensity and frequency of droughts in many areas, creating more intense and frequent wildfires. Wildfires are also common in grasslands and scrublands. On occasions, wildfires have caused large-scale damage to private or public property, destroying many homes and causing deaths, particularly when they've reached urban-fringe communities.



In the U.S., there are a number of specific terms that are applicable to such fires. A Wildland fire is "any non-structure fire, that occurs in the wildland", and there are three distinct types of wildland fire which are defined:

- Wildfire is "an unplanned, unwanted wildland fire, including unauthorized human-caused fires, escaped wildland fire use events, escaped prescribed fire projects and all other wildland fires where the objective is to put the fire out."
- Wildland fire use is "the application of the appropriate management response to naturally ignited wildland fires to accomplish specific resource management objectives in predefined designated areas outlined in Fire Management Plans."
- Prescribed fire is "any fire ignited by management actions to meet specific objectives."



One of the largest known wild fires, was the Great Fire of 1910, that burned in Montana and Idaho. In 2002, the 'Biscuit Fire' burned almost 500,000 acres in Oregon and California in. The 2007 Greek fires were some of the deadliest in world history, killing at least 64 people in Peloponnese and Evia. The 2007 Southern California wildfires, burning an estimated 500,000 acres of land (in the San Diego and Malibu areas), with almost 900,000 people evacuated from the area.