

Europe drought leading to more property damage: study

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Cracked mud is pictured at sunrise in the dried shores of Lake Gruyere affected by continuous drought near the western Switzerland village of Avry-devant-Pont. Increasing occurrences of drought have led to a jump in European insurance claims for damage to homes owing to subsiding soil, a study by reinsurer Swiss Re and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology said.

Increasing occurrences of drought have led to a jump in European insurance claims for damage to homes owing to subsiding soil, a study by reinsurer Swiss Re and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology said on Monday.

With temperatures set to rise in coming years and less regular [rainfall](#) amid climate change, future potential losses from [soil](#) movements are expected to increase in some areas by over 50 percent for the period 2021 to 2040 compared to today, said the study.

"A long and intense dry spell can lower the ground so much that it creates fissures in the earth and tears apart the foundations of houses, bridges, industrial sites and other structures," explained the research.

"In the worst case, shifting soil can cause whole buildings to collapse," it said.

Large swathes of France, Britain, Germany as well as northern Spain are already now showing jumps of more than 50 percent in potential claims compared to the period 1951 to 1970.

"In France alone, [economic losses](#) from soil subsidence have risen by over 50 percent since 1990, amounting to an average of 340 million euros (\$494 million) a year," said the study.

"Climate change will further increase the frequency and intensity of drought-induced soil subsidence -- and with it the risk of future damage to properties.

"Large parts of Europe will experience more sporadic rainfall and drier soils, and as a result face far greater losses from shifting soil," it warned.

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