

Forest fires destroy a tenth of Greece in 25 years: report

July 21 2011



A view of fire devastated areas lying between the villages of Kalentzi and Marathon in 2009. Forest fires have devastated more than 10 percent of Greek territory in a 25-year period, mostly in the southern Peloponnese peninsula, a report published Thursday said.

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The total area destroyed from 1983 to 2008 amounted to some 1.3 million hectares (3.2 million acres), said the report by the Greek institute of [agricultural research](#) (Ethiage) and the Greek office of WWF.

"On an annual basis there have been 1,465 [forest fires](#), which burned 52,000 hectares of [forest](#) and farm land," said the report published by

the [Athens](#) press agency.

The most affected region has been the Peloponnese where 19 percent of the fires took place, destroying 27 percent of forests and farm land there.

The cause of most of the fires was not clear. About 11 percent were the result of arson and about nine percent were triggered by fires [farmers](#) lit to clear their properties.

The majority of the fires were in the month of August, spread by wind from the north during this time of year, but the most devastating month was July, the hottest period of the year on average.

The two organisations which prepared the report called on Greek authorities to "develop an effective system to protect the country's forests."

One of the most serious fires in Greece took place in 2007, when 77 people died and 250,000 hectares were ravaged, mainly in the Peloponnese and the island of Euboea, the second-largest island after Crete.

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