

Fire season in West expected to get more intense

July 23 2014

(AP)—Despite widespread drought in the West, wildfires have burned less than half the 10-year average area so far this summer.

U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell said Wednesday that largely has been a matter of luck, with the hot, windy weather known as "red flag" days not lining up with the lightning strikes that start fires, particularly in California.

But he says that is changing. Eighteen large fires are burning in the Northwest with intensities not normally seen until August.

Firefighters on Wednesday were chasing 25 new fires ignited by thunderstorms moving across Northern California, Oregon and Washington.

Meanwhile, the Union of Concerned Scientists released a report warning [climate change](#) is contributing to bigger and longer [fire](#) seasons, and new homes in forests are driving up firefighting costs.

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Citation: Fire season in West expected to get more intense (2014, July 23) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-07-season-west-intense.html>

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