

NASA image: Veld Fires in South Africa

August 27 2014



This natural-color satellite image was collected by the Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer aboard the Aqua satellite on Aug. 26, 2014. Actively burning areas, detected by MODIS's thermal bands, are outlined in red. Credit: Jeff Schmaltz, MODIS Rapid Response Team

South Africa is entering what is described by the Volunteer Wildfire Services of South Africa as "Cape Fire Season." The Eastern Cape provincial government warned residents in certain parts of the province

on Monday (8/25) of strong winds and veld fires. A high veld fire danger rating is expected in the north-western interior and along the coast in the Great Kei and Mnquma area. Strong winds often occurred along coastal regions, and during thunderstorms. The thunderstorms bring lightning strikes and subsequent fire and the wind serves to spread the fire from one place to another. The risk of veld fires was linked to prolonged periods of little or no rain, coupled with warm, dry winds. Residents are also warned not to throw bottles in the veld as they can magnify the sun's rays and start fires.

In South Africa, this fire index map shows the daily fire danger for various areas: <http://www.weathersa.co.za/home/fire-index>. Today's fire danger map (8/27) shows most of the area at Very Dangerous to Extremely Dangerous levels.

Zimbabwe is by and large a savannah grassland country, with a few stretches of level, unforested grassy plains (steppes) here and there, plus some thick wooded sub-tropical forests in some regions. This type of topography makes veld fires spread more quickly as there is ample fuel for the fire across the grasslands. Veld fires which are dangerous to begin with, are also destroying farmland and making yearly food production difficult in this area as it takes time before the land can be tilled again.

Mozambique is also being plagued with veld fires in this satellite image from Aqua.

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Provided by NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center

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