

Spain deploys aircraft to battle wildfires

December 28 2015



Flames and smoke columns, due to wildfires, raise in La Roza rural area, near Cangas de Onis, where a helicopter that was battling a fire crashed on December 23, 2015

Spain on Sunday deployed three water-dropping planes to battle wildfires raging in remote regions in northern and central Spain amid unseasonably warm weather, the government said.

The agriculture ministry said two amphibious water-scooping aircraft were sent to help douse fires in the northern [region](#) of Cantabria and

another plane was dispatched to the central region of Castile and Leon.

The head of the regional government of Cantabria, Miguel Angel Revilla said winds of 80 kilometres (50 miles) an hour were fuelling 70 wildfires in the region.

He called the situation an "absolute emergency" in a Twitter message and said his government had appealed for help from the army to put out the fires.

The [government](#) in the neighbouring region of Asturias in northwestern Spain said 20 [wildfires](#) were burning within its boundaries, including eight which firefighters had under control.

A helicopter battling a fire in Asturias crashed on Wednesday, killing the pilot and sole occupant of the aircraft.

Forest fires are unusual in December in Spain but low rainfall and a warm autumn have left much of the country vulnerable to blazes.

Wildfires have destroyed more than 54,000 hectares (13,300 acres) of agricultural and forest land in Spain this year, exceeding the area burned over the previous two years combined, most of it in major summer fires, according to agriculture ministry figures.

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