

Week-long Spanish wildfires extinguished as rain comes to rescue

December 29 2015



A firefighter carries works to put out wildfires near the northern Spanish Basque town of Berango on December 28, 2015

After a week-long battle against more than 200 wildfires that ravaged northern Spain, local authorities and rescue services announced Tuesday that long-awaited rainfall had helped extinguish the blazes.

The worst-affected region of Cantabria, where nearly 700 firefighters,

soldiers, police and volunteers struggled against wind-fuelled fires that came dangerously close to remote villages, said the fires had been put out although zones of "dying embers that are under control" still remained.

In a statement, the local government said rain had finally fallen on a region hit by unseasonably warm weather.

Emergency services in the nearby regions of Asturias and Navarra, also hit hard by [wildfires](#), said blazes there had been extinguished or were under control.

The [forest fires](#) have devastated swathes of northern Spain and claimed one life—that of a helicopter pilot who crashed last week as he battled a fire in Asturias.

In Cantabria, at least 2,000 hectares (5,000 acres) of "extraordinary ecological value" burned over the past week, much of it located in two natural parks.

The head of the regional government, Miguel Angel Revilla, said that "99 percent" of the fires were deliberately set.

"There are arsonists, people with bad intentions who are taking advantage of weather conditions never seen before in Cantabria" to set fires, he added.

In its statement, the government said [emergency services](#) remained on high alert in the region, with winds and high temperatures expected to make a comeback.

Soldiers and emergency workers were to continue patrolling the area "to act as deterrents."

Altogether, wildfires have destroyed more than 54,000 hectares of agricultural and forest land in Spain this year, exceeding the area gutted by [fire](#) over the previous two years combined, according to agriculture ministry figures.

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