

In heat emergency, Greece adds checks for fires, power cuts

July 30 2021, by Derek Gatopoulos



A woman reads a book at a beach of Kavouri suburb, southwest of Athens, on Friday, July 30, 2021. Greek authorities ordered additional fire patrols and infrastructure maintenance inspections Friday as the country grappled with a heat wave expected to last more than a week, with temperatures expected to reach 42 C (107.6 F). Credit: AP Photo/Yorgos Karahalidis

Greek authorities ordered additional fire patrols and infrastructure maintenance inspections Friday as the country grappled with a heat wave fed by hot air from Africa that is expected to last more than a week.

The emergency measures will also include efforts to create more air-conditioned areas open to the public in cities around Greece and at [refugee camps](#), though the efforts are complicated by COVID-19 pandemic-related limits on how many people can gather together.

Temperatures in Greece and nearby countries in southeast Europe are expected to climb to 42 degrees Celsius (107.6 F) in many cities and towns on Monday and ease only later next week.

Officials said the additional inspections were aimed at preventing water and [power outages](#), with the increased use of air conditioning testing the country's energy capacity.

Sporadic outages were reported in parts of greater Athens on Friday, but some had been planned by the grid operator for maintenance work.

"This is a dangerous weather phenomenon. We have been saying it from the start of the week," said Theodoris Kolydas, director of Greece's National Meteorological Service.

"The conditions will be stubborn and only subside gradually... very hot air masses from the shores of Africa are heading toward our region."



A youth jumps in the sea at a beach of Kavouri suburb, southwest of Athens, on Friday, July 30, 2021. Greek authorities ordered additional fire patrols and infrastructure maintenance inspections Friday as the country grappled with a heat wave expected to last more than a week, with temperatures expected to reach 42 C (107.6 F). Credit: AP Photo/Yorgos Karahalidis



Swimmers walk into the sea at a beach of Kavouri suburb, southwest of Athens, on Friday, July 30, 2021. Greek authorities ordered additional fire patrols and infrastructure maintenance inspections Friday as the country grappled with a heat wave expected to last more than a week, with temperatures expected to reach 42 C (107.6 F). Credit: AP Photo/Yorgos Karahalidis



A man sunbathes as others sit under a pine tree at a beach of Kavouri suburb, southwest of Athens, on Friday, July 30, 2021. Greek authorities ordered additional fire patrols and infrastructure maintenance inspections Friday as the country grappled with a heat wave expected to last more than a week, with temperatures expected to reach 42 C (107.6 F). Credit: AP Photo/Yorgos Karahalidis



A man swims in the sea with a mask and snorkel at a beach of Vouliagmeni suburb, southwest of Athens, on Friday, July 30, 2021. Greek authorities ordered additional fire patrols and infrastructure maintenance inspections Friday as the country grappled with a heat wave expected to last more than a week, with temperatures expected to reach 42 C (107.6 F). Credit: AP Photo/Yorgos Karahalis



A person swims in the sea at a beach of Kavouri suburb, southwest of Athens, on Friday, July 30, 2021. Greek authorities ordered additional fire patrols and infrastructure maintenance inspections Friday as the country grappled with a heat wave expected to last more than a week, with temperatures expected to reach 42 C (107.6 F). Credit: AP Photo/Yorgos Karahalidis



People jump in the sea at a beach of Kavouri suburb, southwest of Athens, on Friday, July 30, 2021. Greek authorities ordered additional fire patrols and infrastructure maintenance inspections Friday as the country grappled with a heat wave expected to last more than a week, with temperatures expected to reach 42 C (107.6 F). Credit: AP Photo/Yorgos Karahalidis

Workers most exposed to the heat, including those in construction, manual labor, catering and elsewhere, will be given longer breaks next week between midday and 4:00 p.m. Employers were also instructed by the Labor Ministry to provide water and air-conditioned rest areas.

As the temperatures rose, three separate wildfires damaged homes in southern Greece this week, outside Athens and the western city of Patras.

Civil protection chief Nikos Hardalias said [climate change](#) was raising the fire risk.

"On average (in mid-summer), we are dealing with about 50 fires per day, and many of those are under difficult conditions. That number is clearly increasing each year," Hardalias told private Antenna television.

"It's a phenomenon that's gradually getting worse. Climate change is now a climate threat. I say it everywhere I go. We all have a responsibility to protect the country," he said.

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