

Forest fires in Bolivia consume vast area: official

August 8 2021



Firefighters try to extinguish a grass fire near the Viru Viru airport in Santa Cruz, Bolivia on August 1, 2021; the department has been hard hit by forest fires.

Forest fires this year have consumed more than 147,000 hectares (360,000 acres) in Bolivia's eastern Santa Cruz department, the regional

government reported Saturday.

As in neighboring Brazil, the fires have been aggravated by widespread deforestation aimed at expanding farming or pasture land.

And they come in a year when [climate change](#) has become an increasingly urgent issue with mammoth wildfires in the Western US as well as in Greece and Turkey.

"At a departmental level, 147,254 hectares have been affected by [forest fires](#)," Yovenka Rosado, coordinator of Santa Cruz's Forest Fire Program, announced.

The most severely affected areas border Brazil.

Rosado said a Super Puma helicopter was being used to douse the larger fire sites with water, and [emergency personnel](#) and equipment were being deployed to key spots.

Rosado said 831 fires had been reported just in the first days of August, for a total this year of 15,555.

Each year Bolivia confronts forest-fire outbreaks started by settlers in [remote areas](#) or by agribusinesses trying to expand their production.

Bolivian NGO the Friends of Nature Foundation estimates that forest fires last year destroyed more than 2.3 million hectares of forests and grassland.

In 2019 huge fires in Bolivia's Amazon destroyed about 6.4 million hectares, the group said.

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