

Villages evacuated as fresh wildfires hit Greece

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A new forest fire has broken out on the southern part of Greece's Evia island, less than two weeks after an inferno decimated its northern part.

Scores of firefighters battled to contain two new wildfires in Greece on Monday, as winds fanned the blazes and forced several villages and

neighbourhoods to be evacuated.

Both fires erupted not far from the site of devastating wildfires that swept parts of Greece earlier this summer, forcing thousands from their homes and destroying property, wildlife and livestock.

Scientists have warned that extreme weather and fierce fires will become increasingly common due to man-made global warming, and Greece's prime minister has linked the blazes to climate change.

The first fire broke out in the early hours Monday on southern Evia island, northeast of the capital Athens, and the Greek fire brigade said the blaze was largely contained at noon but had not been brought under control.

Two neighbourhoods were evacuated and several boats were offshore to offer help to contain the fires.

A second fire broke out Monday in Vilia, some 60 kilometres (37 miles) northwest of Athens, in an area of thick forestland.

Greek police blocked traffic on a nearby highway as winds fanned the blaze, while two villages were evacuated in the area as a preventative measure.

"The battle against the fires continues wherever there is a front," government spokesman Yiannis Oikonomou said Monday.

"We have already started repairing damage and providing practical support to those affected," he added.

The civil protection authorities had warned Sunday a "very high risk" of fire for many areas of Greece on Monday.

Since July, wildfires have ravaged the islands of Evia and Rhodes as well as forests to the north and southeast of Athens and parts of the Peloponnese peninsula. Three people have died in the fires.

An earlier fire in Evia burned for more than 10 days, decimating swathes of land, while another blaze that hit Vilia lasted six days was only declared under control on Saturday.

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