

Crews in southern Spain face 'complex' wildfire for 5th day

September 13 2021, by Aritz Parra



Forest firefighters work on a wildfire near the town of Jubrique, in Malaga province, Spain, Saturday, Sept. 11, 2021. Firefighting crews in southern Spain are waiting for much-needed rainfall expected on Monday that they hope can help extinguish a stubborn mega-fire that has ravaged 7,400 hectares (18,300 acres) in five days and displaced some 3,000 people from their homes. Credit: AP Photo/Pedro Armestre

Firefighting crews near southern Spain's Costa del Sol were hoping for much-needed rainfall Monday to help them extinguish a major wildfire that has ravaged 7,700 hectares (19,000 acres) in five days and forced the evacuations of 2,600 people.

Authorities are describing the blaze in Sierra Bermeja, a mountain range in Malaga province, as an extreme "mega-fire" brought on by [climate change](#) —a catastrophic event that kill, blacken large areas and is difficult to stop.

In Spain, that's paired with rural depopulation, leading to poorer management of forests and the accumulation of burnable material.

"We are facing the most complex fire known by the forestry extinction services in recent years," Juan Sánchez, director of the southern Andalusia region's firefighting service, told reporters late Sunday.

"We have been talking a lot about the consequences of the abandonment of rural areas and climate change," Sánchez added. "We are seeing them today."

The scorched area has doubled since Saturday, when authorities said the flames were contained within a perimeter of 40 kilometers (25 miles). But embers ignited another hot spot soon after, causing a new wildfire that eventually joined the previous blaze, experts said Sunday. By Monday morning, the wildfire's perimeter had reached 85 kilometers (53 miles).



Forest firefighters prepare their equipment before boarding the helicopter to work on extinguishing a wildfire near the town of Jubrique, in Malaga province, Spain, Monday, Sept. 13, 2021. Firefighting crews in southern Spain are looking at the sky for much-needed rainfall they hope can help extinguish a stubborn mega-fire that has ravaged 7,400 hectares (18,300 acres) in five days and displaced just under 3,000 people from their homes. Authorities are describing the blaze in Sierra Bermeja, a mountain range in the Malaga province, as a sixth-generation fire of the extreme kind brought by the shifting climate on the planet. Credit: AP Photo/Pedro Armestre

Spain's weather agency, AEMET, predicted rain in the arealater Monday but it was not clear if the rainfall would be sufficient to quell the flames.

About 650 firefighters were working in shifts on the ground, assisted by

51 water-dropping airplanes and helicopters. They were joined on Sunday by 260 members of a military emergency unit.

Low visibility due to dust and smoke was blamed for an accident Monday involving a firefighters' helicopter, although none of its 19 occupants were injured. Another 44-year-old firefighter died Thursday while trying to extinguish the blaze.

Around 2,600 residents have been evacuated. Those who left areas near the resort town of Estepona were able to return home by Monday, but 1,700 people remained displaced from six villages.

Climate scientists say there's little doubt that climate change from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas is driving more extreme events, such as heat waves, droughts, wildfires, floods and storms.



A forest firefighter works extinguishing hot spots in a wildfire near the town of Jubrique, in Malaga province, Spain, Saturday, Sept. 11, 2021. Firefighting crews in southern Spain are waiting for much-needed rainfall expected on Monday that they hope can help extinguish a stubborn mega-fire that has ravaged 7,400 hectares (18,300 acres) in five days and displaced some 3,000 people from their homes. Credit: AP Photo/Pedro Armestre



Smoke rises over smoking mountains, near the town of Jubrique, in Malaga province, Spain, Monday, Sept. 13, 2021. Firefighting crews in southern Spain are looking at the sky for much-needed rainfall they hope can help extinguish a stubborn mega-fire that has ravaged 7,400 hectares (18,300 acres) in five days and displaced just under 3,000 people from their homes. Authorities are describing the blaze in Sierra Bermeja, a mountain range in the Malaga province, as a sixth-generation fire of the extreme kind brought by the shifting climate on the planet. Credit: AP Photo/Pedro Armestre



Forest firefighters work on a wildfire near the town of Jubrique, in Malaga province, Spain, Saturday, Sept. 11, 2021. Firefighting crews in southern Spain are waiting for much-needed rainfall expected on Monday that they hope can help extinguish a stubborn mega-fire that has ravaged 7,400 hectares (18,300 acres) in five days and displaced some 3,000 people from their homes. Credit: AP Photo/Pedro Armestre



Forest firefighters work in a wildfire near the town of Jubrique, in Malaga province, Spain, Saturday, Sept. 11, 2021. Firefighting crews in southern Spain are waiting for much-needed rainfall expected on Monday that they hope can help extinguish a stubborn mega-fire that has ravaged 7,400 hectares (18,300 acres) in five days and displaced some 3,000 people from their homes. Credit: AP Photo/Pedro Armestre



Smoke rises over smoke filled mountains near the town of Jubrique, in Malaga province, Spain, Monday, Sept. 13, 2021. Firefighting crews in southern Spain are looking at the sky for much-needed rainfall they hope can help extinguish a stubborn mega-fire that has ravaged 7,400 hectares (18,300 acres) in five days and displaced just under 3,000 people from their homes. Authorities are describing the blaze in Sierra Bermeja, a mountain range in the Malaga province, as a sixth-generation fire of the extreme kind brought by the shifting climate on the planet. Credit: AP Photo/Pedro Armestre



A seaplane flies over a wildfire near the town of Jubrique, in Malaga province, Spain, Monday, Sept. 13, 2021. Firefighting crews in southern Spain are looking at the sky for much-needed rainfall they hope can help extinguish a stubborn mega-fire that has ravaged 7,400 hectares (18,300 acres) in five days and displaced just under 3,000 people from their homes. Authorities are describing the blaze in Sierra Bermeja, a mountain range in the Malaga province, as a sixth-generation fire of the extreme kind brought by the shifting climate on the planet. Credit: AP Photo/Pedro Armestre

Spain has experienced fewer fires so far this year than the average, but the number of big forest fires—those affecting more than 500 hectares (1,200 acres)—was 19 in the first eight months of 2021 compared to 14 on average for the same period since 2011.

That has also led to a greater area burned: 75,000 hectares (186,000 acres) as of Sept. 5, compared to an average of 71,000 hectares on average in the previous years, according to official data.

Elías Bedondo, the Andalusia region's interior minister, said he had no doubt that the wildfire in Sierra Bermeja was "unprecedented" and that it will be studied for future mega-fires.

"Here we are learning how to fight and focus on these sixth-generation type of fires," he said.

© 2021 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: Crews in southern Spain face 'complex' wildfire for 5th day (2021, September 13) retrieved 26 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-09-crews-southern-spain-complex->

[wildfire.html](#)

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.