

Europe braces for blistering June weekend heat

June 18 2022, by Tom Barfield With Mathieu Gorse In Madrid



The weather on Saturday will represent a peak of a June heatwave.

France, Spain and other western European nations braced on Saturday for a sweltering June weekend that is set to break records and sparked concern about forest fires and the effects of climate change.

The weather on Saturday will represent a peak of a June heatwave that is in line with warnings from scientists that such phenomena will now hit earlier than usual thanks to climate change.

Temperatures already nudged over 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) in parts of France on Friday.

But they are due to relent slightly from Sunday with thunderstorms forecast in parts of France and elsewhere in Europe.

French state weather forecaster Meteo France said June temperature records had already been beaten in 11 areas on Friday and could reach as high as 42 Celsius in some areas on Saturday.

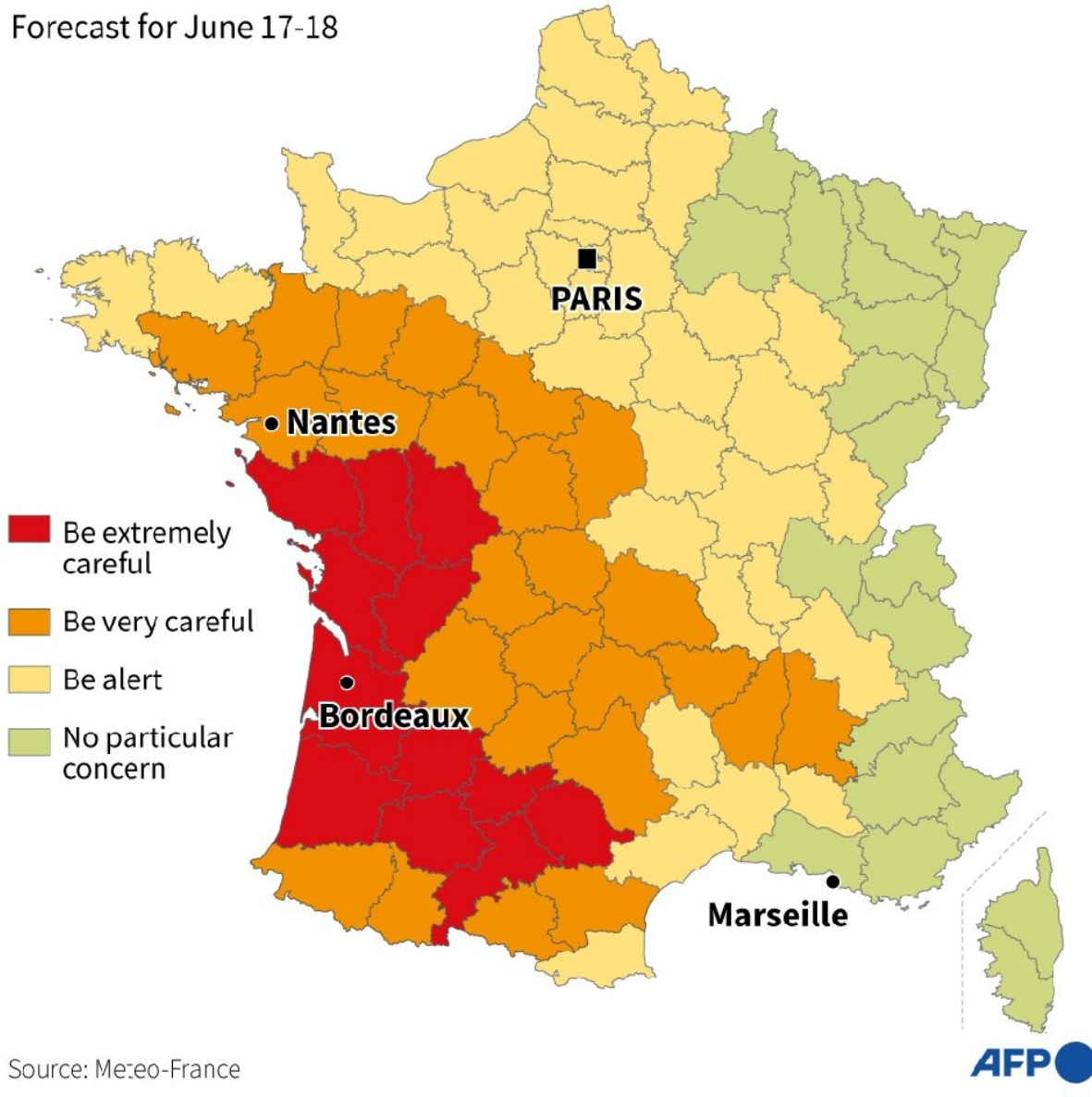
"This is the earliest heatwave ever recorded in France" since 1947, said Matthieu Sorel, a climatologist at Meteo France.

With "many monthly or even all-time temperature records likely to be beaten in several regions," he called the weather a "marker of climate change".

In Spain, [forest fires](#) burned nearly 9,000 hectares (22,240 acres) of land in the northwest Sierra de la Culebra region on Friday, forcing some 200 people from their homes, regional authorities said.

France heatwave warnings

Forecast for June 17-18



France heatwave warnings.

And more than 3,000 people were evacuated from the Puy du Fou theme park in central Spain due to a fierce fire nearby.

Firefighters were battling fires in several other regions, including woodlands in Catalonia where [weather conditions](#) complicated the fight.

Temperatures were above 35 Celsius on Friday in most parts of the country.

Hospitals full

More than half of French departments were at the highest or second-highest heat alert level by the afternoon on Friday.

"Hospitals are at capacity, but are keeping up with demand," Health Minister Brigitte Bourguignon told reporters in Vienne, near Lyon in the southeast.

Schoolchildren were told to stay at home in departments at alert level "red" and the [health ministry](#) activated a special heatwave hotline.

The Red Cross also organised efforts to distribute water to the homeless community in Toulouse, where temperatures are expected to soar to 38 degrees Celsius on Saturday.



Experts warned the high temperatures were caused by worrying climate change trends.

"There are more deaths of people in the streets in the summer than in the winter," said volunteer Hugues Juglair, 67.

Meanwhile rock and metal fans at the music festival Hellfest in western France were sprayed with water from hoses and enormous vaporisers in front of the stage as they headbanged or bounced to an opening-day line-up including Deftones and The Offspring.

Several towns in northern Italy have announced water rationing and the Lombardy region may declare a state of emergency as a record drought threatens harvests.

Ibrahim Thiaw, executive secretary of the UN convention charged with reversing land degradation, on Friday warned drought was "set to increase in severity and frequency".

"The consequences of droughts could affect up to three-quarters of humanity by 2050," he said during a speech in Madrid.

The UK recorded its hottest day of the year on Friday with temperatures reaching over 30 Celsius in the early afternoon, meteorologists said.

It was the third day in a row that temperature records had been broken in the UK, where it was over 28 Celsius on Wednesday and 29.5 Celsius on Thursday.



Spain has been hit by a week-long heatwave.

Climate change

Experts warned the high temperatures were caused by worrying climate change trends.

"As a result of climate change, heatwaves are starting earlier," said Clare Nullis, a spokeswoman for the World Meteorological Organization in Geneva.

"What we're witnessing today is unfortunately a foretaste of the future" if concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere continue to rise and push global warming towards 2 Celsius from pre-industrial levels, she added.

In France, [special measures](#) have been taken in care homes for elderly people, still marked by the memory of a deadly 2003 heatwave that claimed at least 15,000 lives.

Buildings are being sprayed down with water to cool them and residents are being rotated through air-conditioned rooms.

In the Gironde department, which includes Bordeaux, authorities said all public events outdoors or in non-air-conditioned venues would be banned from 2:00 pm (1200 GMT) on Friday, a measure set to be broadened across the region.



A temperature of 42.5 degrees Celsius recorded on a sign outside a pharmacy in Bordeaux, south-western France, on Friday.

And [speed limits](#) in several regions, including around Paris, have been reduced to limit the concentration of harmful smog or ozone in the heat.

Paris police chief Didier Lallement said only the least polluting vehicles would be allowed to drive in the capital on Saturday due to fine particle pollution.

Electric grid operator RTE said increased use of fans and air-conditioners was also driving up power consumption.

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