

Europe counts cost of heatwave as French fires come under control

July 20 2022, by Mathilde TONNERRE with John HADOULIS in Athens and Jitendra JOSHI in London



A De Havilland Canada Dash 8-400 MR aircraft drops water over a wildfire raging in the Monts d'Arree, near Brennilis, Brittany.

Europe counted the cost of a record heatwave on Wednesday as French

firefighters brought twin blazes near Bordeaux under control and climate change protesters pointed to the sizzling weather as a wake up call for the continent.

Temperatures of more than 40 degrees Celsius (100 degrees Fahrenheit) over previous days have spelled misery for millions and shattered heat records, focusing attention on the impact of global warming.

Cooler air swept in Wednesday, bringing relief to people from Portugal to Britain, but thousands of firefighters continued to tackle mass fires that have broken out in multiple countries in recent days after months of drought-like conditions.

"Our assessment is generally positive. The situation improved overnight," French fire service spokesman Arnaud Mendousse told AFP from the southwestern Gironde region where two huge blazes have engulfed 20,600 hectares (50,900 acres) of tinder-dry forest since last week.

The infernos had barely expanded overnight, with [lower temperatures](#) and the construction of a 300-metre wide fire break helping stem the spread of the flames.

President Emmanuel Macron was set to visit later on Wednesday to speak to emergency services members and some of the 37,000 people who have been evacuated in the popular Atlantic Ocean region that is teeming with tourists in the [summer months](#).



Firefighters were in action against a wildfire that forced hundreds to flee a suburb of Athens.

Two firefighters were severely injured overnight, government spokesman Olivier Veran told reporters.

Separate blazes in the Monts d'Arree area of northwestern Brittany continued to rage on Wednesday, with aircraft dropping water from above.

Greek planes and helicopters were also in action against a wildfire that has forced hundreds of people to flee mountainside suburbs north of Athens.

Greece had been spared the scorching heatwave experienced in western Europe, but the flames fanned by high winds were threatening the suburbs of Penteli, Pallini, Anthousa and Gerakas, home to tens of thousands of people.

"The civil protection authority was late in alerting us," a Pallini resident who lost his car and shed to the flames told ERT television. "The fire was scorching our backs, we left in the nick of time. Had we stayed another 30 seconds it would have burned us."

Firefighters have also been pressed into action in Portugal, Spain and Italy in recent weeks to tackle wild fires.



Blazes in the Monts d'Arree area of France's northwestern Brittany continue to burn.

Heat records

The heatwave saw a host of local records set in France and a new all-time record for Britain where the [national weather service](#) clocked 40.3C in eastern England, surpassing the previous high set in 2019.

Grassland fires erupted on Tuesday on the edge of London, with one forcing the evacuation of 14 people as farm buildings, houses and garages were consumed by the flames.

Sixteen firefighters were injured around the capital with two taken to hospital, the London Fire Brigade said.

"Yesterday was the busiest day for the [fire](#) service in London since the Second World War," the city's mayor Sadiq Khan told Sky News on Wednesday, urging the public to remain vigilant despite temperatures now falling.

Khan also accused Conservative leadership candidates vying to succeed Prime Minister Boris Johnson of ignoring "the elephant in the room" of [climate change](#).

Record temperatures in Britain

Some 34 localities recorded temperatures above 38.7°C, the previous British record set in July 2019, according to the Met Office



Source: Met Office



Map of Britain locating places which recorded above the previous British high temperature record of 38.7°C.



Cooler air swept into western Europe helping to bring fires under control.

Climate demonstrators triggered a lengthy tailback on Britain's busiest motorway encircling London on Wednesday as they sought to highlight the need for greater action to reduce [greenhouse gases](#) which are responsible for global heating.

Members of the group Just Stop Oil climbed gantries over the M25 arterial motorway, causing police to intervene and vehicles to back up for several miles (kilometres) in one direction.

"This is the moment when climate inaction is truly revealed in all its murderous glory for everyone to see: as an elite-driven death project that

will extinguish all life if we let it," the activist group said in a statement.

© 2022 AFP

Citation: Europe counts cost of heatwave as French fires come under control (2022, July 20)
retrieved 2 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2022-07-europe-heatwave-french.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.