

# Europe broils in heat wave that fuels fires in France, Spain

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A firefighter walks among flames at a forest fire near Louchats, 35 kms (22 miles) from Landiras in Gironde, southwestern France, Monday, July 18, 2022. France scrambled more water-bombing planes and hundreds more firefighters to combat spreading wildfires that were being fed Monday by hot swirling winds from a searing heat wave broiling much of Europe. With winds changing direction, authorities in southwestern France announced plans to evacuate more towns and move out 3,500 people at risk of finding themselves in the path of the raging flames. Credit: Phillippe Lopez

A heat wave broiling Europe spilled northward Monday to Britain and fueled ferocious wildfires in Spain and France, which evacuated thousands of people and scrambled water-bombing planes and firefighters to battle flames in tinder-dry forests.

Two people were killed in the blazes in Spain that its prime minister linked to global warming, saying, "Climate change kills."

That toll comes on top of the hundreds of heat-related deaths reported in the Iberian peninsula, as high temperatures have gripped the continent in recent days and triggered wildfires from Portugal to the Balkans. Some areas, including northern Italy, are also experiencing extended droughts. Climate change makes such life-threatening extremes less of a rarity—and heat waves have come even to places like Britain, which braced for possible record-breaking temperatures.

The hot weather in the U.K. was expected to be so severe this week that train operators warned it could warp the rails and some schools set up wading pools to help children cool off.

In France, heat records were broken and swirling hot winds complicated firefighting in the country's southwest.

"The fire is literally exploding," said Marc Vermeulen, the regional fire service chief who described tree trunks shattering as flames consumed them, sending burning embers into the air and further spreading the blazes.



A firefighter takes position as smoke rises at a forest fire near Louchats, 35 kms (22 miles) from Landiras in Gironde, southwestern France, Monday, July 18, 2022. France scrambled more water-bombing planes and hundreds more firefighters to combat spreading wildfires that were being fed Monday by hot swirling winds from a searing heat wave broiling much of Europe. With winds changing direction, authorities in southwestern France announced plans to evacuate more towns and move out 3,500 people at risk of finding themselves in the path of the raging flames. Credit: Phillippe Lopez

"We're facing extreme and exceptional circumstances," he said.

Authorities evacuated more towns, moving another 14,900 people from areas that could find themselves in the path of the fires and choking smoke. In all, more than 31,000 people have been forced from their

homes and summer vacation spots in the Gironde region since the wildfires began July 12.

Three additional planes were sent to join six others fighting the fires, scooping up seawater and making repeated runs through dense clouds of smoke, the Interior Ministry said Sunday night.

More than 200 reinforcements headed to join the 1,500 firefighters trying to contain the blazes in the Gironde, where flames neared prized vineyards and billowed smoke across the Arcachon maritime basin famed for its oysters and beaches.

Spain, meanwhile, reported a second fatality in two days in its own blazes. The body of a 69-year-old sheep farmer was found Monday in the same hilly area where a 62-year-old firefighter died a day earlier when he was trapped by flames in the northwestern Zamora province. More than 30 forest fires around Spain have forced the evacuation of thousands of people and blackened 220 square kilometers (85 square miles) of forest and scrub.



This photo provided by the fire brigade of the Gironde region (SDIS 33) shows a firefighter stands next to wildfire near Landiras, southwestern France, Monday morning, July 18, 2022. France scrambled more water-bombing planes and hundreds more firefighters to combat spreading wildfires that were being fed Monday by hot swirling winds from a searing heat wave broiling much of Europe. With winds changing direction, authorities in southwestern France announced plans to evacuate more towns and move out 3,500 people at risk of finding themselves in the path of the raging flames. Credit: SDIS 33 via AP

Passengers on a train through Zamora got a frightening, close look at a blaze, when their train halted in the countryside. Video of the unscheduled—and unnerving—stop showed about a dozen passengers in a railcar becoming alarmed as they looked out of the windows at the flames encroaching on both sides of the track.

Climate scientists say [heat waves are more intense](#), more frequent and longer because of climate change—and coupled with droughts have made wildfires harder to fight. They say climate change will continue to make weather more extreme and wildfires more frequent and destructive.

"Climate change kills," Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said Monday during a visit to the Extremadura region, the site of three major blazes. "It kills people, it kills our ecosystems and biodiversity."



Firefighters and civil protection personnel work at a field command post in the village of Villandraut, near Landiras, southwestern France, Monday, July 18, 2022. France scrambled more water-bombing planes and hundreds more firefighters to combat spreading wildfires that were being fed Monday by hot

swirling winds from a searing heat wave broiling much of Europe. With winds changing direction, authorities in southwestern France announced plans to evacuate more towns and move out 3,500 people at risk of finding themselves in the path of the raging flames. Credit: AP Photo/Bob Edme

Teresa Ribera, Spain's minister for ecological transition, described her country as "literally under fire" as she attended talks on climate change in Berlin.

She warned of "terrifying prospects still for the days to come"—after more than 10 days of temperatures over 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit), cooling only moderately at night.

At least 748 heat-related deaths have been reported in the heat wave in Spain and neighboring Portugal, where temperatures reached 47 C (117 F) earlier this month.

The heat wave in Spain was forecast to ease on Tuesday, but the respite will be brief as temperatures rise again on Wednesday, especially in the dry western Extremadura region.

In Britain, officials have issued the first-ever extreme heat warning, and the weather service forecast that the record high of 38.7 C (101.7 F), set in 2019, could be shattered.



Smoke rises from at a forest fire near Louchats, 35 kms (22 miles) from Landiras in Gironde, southwestern France, Monday, July 18, 2022. France scrambled more water-bombing planes and hundreds more firefighters to combat spreading wildfires that were being fed Monday by hot swirling winds from a searing heat wave broiling much of Europe. With winds changing direction, authorities in southwestern France announced plans to evacuate more towns and move out 3,500 people at risk of finding themselves in the path of the raging flames. Credit: Phillippe Lopez





Firefighters puts water on a trees at a forest fire near Louchats, 35 kms (22 miles) from Landiras in Gironde, southwestern France, Monday, July 18, 2022. France scrambled more water-bombing planes and hundreds more firefighters to combat spreading wildfires that were being fed Monday by hot swirling winds from a searing heat wave broiling much of Europe. With winds changing direction, authorities in southwestern France announced plans to evacuate more towns and move out 3,500 people at risk of finding themselves in the path of the raging flames. Credit: Phillippe Lopez



A firefighter cries near a wildfire in the Losacio area in north western Spain on Sunday July 17, 2022. Firefighters battled wildfires raging out of control in Spain and France as Europe wilted under an unusually extreme heat wave that authorities in Madrid blamed for hundreds of deaths. (Emilio Fraile/Europa Press via AP) **\*\*SPAIN OUT\*\***



A firefighting plane drops retardant on a forest fire in the Castellgali area of Catalonia, Spain on Sunday July 17, 2022. Firefighters battled wildfires raging out of control in Spain and France as Europe wilted under an unusually extreme heat wave that authorities in Madrid blamed for hundreds of deaths. Credit: Lorena Sopena/Europa Press via AP



A woman queues to buy tickets of lottery during a hot and sunny day in Madrid, Spain, Monday, July 18, 2022. Credit: AP Photo/Manu Fernandez



People sit covering their heads from the sun after a scaled down version of the Changing of the Guard ceremony took place outside Buckingham Palace, during hot weather in London, Monday, July 18, 2022. Britain's first-ever extreme heat warning is in effect for large parts of England as hot, dry weather that has scorched mainland Europe for the past week moves north, disrupting travel, health care and schools. Credit: AP Photo/Matt Dunham



A police officer gives water to a British soldier wearing a traditional bearskin hat, on guard duty outside Buckingham Palace, during hot weather in London, Monday, July 18, 2022. The British government have issued their first-ever "red" warning for extreme heat. The alert covers large parts of England on Monday and Tuesday, when temperatures may reach 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) for the first time, posing a risk of serious illness and even death among healthy people, the U.K. Met Office, the country's weather service, said Friday. Credit: AP Photo/Matt Dunham



People cool off while walking along the beach in Laredo, northern Spain, Monday, July 18, 2022. Credit: AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos



A woman uses a hand fan to cool off during a heatwave in Paris, Monday, July 18, 2022. Credit: AP Photo/Lewis Joly





Kids jump from a bridge to swim in the Canal St Martin, during a heatwave in Paris, Monday, July 18, 2022. Credit: AP Photo/Lewis Joly



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This photo provided by the fire brigade of the Gironde region (SDIS 33) shows a wildfire near Landiras, southwestern France, Sunday July 17, 2022 . Firefighters battled wildfires raging out of control in France and Spain on Sunday as Europe wilted under an unusually extreme heat wave that authorities in Madrid blamed for hundreds of deaths. Credit: SDIS 33 via AP



People swim in the elevated pool, called Sky Pool, in London, Monday, July 18, 2022. Britain's first-ever extreme heat warning is in effect for large parts of England as hot, dry weather that has scorched mainland Europe for the past week moves north, disrupting travel, health care and schools. Credit: AP Photo/Alberto Pezzali



This photo provided by the fire brigade of the Gironde region (SDIS 33) shows firefighters working against a wildfire near Landiras, southwestern France, Saturday July 16, 2022. Firefighters are struggling to contain wildfires in France and Spain as Europe wilts under an unusually extreme heat wave that authorities link to a rise in excess mortality. Credit: SDIS 33 via AP

"Forty-one isn't off the cards," said Met Office CEO Penelope Endersby. "We've even got some 43s in the model, but we're hoping it won't be as high as that."

France's often-temperate Brittany region sweltered with a record 39.3 C (102.7 F) degrees in the port of Brest, surpassing a high of 35.1 C that had stood since September 2003, French weather service Meteo-France said.

Regional records in France were broken in over a dozen towns, as the weather service said Monday was "the hottest day of this heat wave."

The Balkans region expected the worst of the heat later this week, but has already seen sporadic wildfires.

Early Monday, authorities in Slovenia said firefighters brought one fire under control. Croatia sent a water-dropping plane there to help after struggling last week with its own wildfires along the Adriatic Sea. A fire in Sibenik forced some people to evacuate their homes but was later extinguished.

In Portugal, much cooler weather Monday helped fire crews make progress. More than 600 firefighters attended four major fires in northern Portugal.

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