

Portugal, France battle big forest fires as mercury soars

August 1 2022



Motorways in southern France were affected by the fires with some having to be closed.

Portugal and France on Sunday battled major forest fires as

temperatures rose sharply this weekend.

In Portugal, a blaze broke out in the Mafra area, north of Lisbon, while in France at least four [firefighters](#) were seriously injured and motorways were closed.

Around 400 firefighters were drafted in to fight the blaze around 40 kilometres (25 miles) north of Lisbon.

Residents tried to slow the advance of the flames by hosing their gardens, as the flames also swept through neighbouring forests, according to television images.

A retirement home housing 30 people was evacuated as a precautionary measure, Commander Paulo Santos of the Civil Protection Authority told Renascenca radio.

Elsewhere, other major outbreaks raged in northern and central Portugal, requiring over 1,000 firefighters.

In central Ourem, a river beach was also evacuated as a precaution, while two people suffered [smoke inhalation](#), according to an emergency official quoted by the Lusa agency.

Parts of northern and central Portugal were placed on alert this weekend in the face of "steep temperature rises" to more than 40 degrees Celsius, (104 degrees Fahrenheit) expected to last until at least Tuesday, according to the meteorological institute.

Experts blame climate change for the soaring temperatures—and warn that worse is yet to come.

Portugal, which remains traumatised by the deadly fires of 2017 which

killed more than 100 people, was also hit in early July by a series of fires fanned by scorching temperatures.

Since the beginning of the year, more than 58,000 hectares (143,000 acres) have gone up in smoke, according to the latest, still provisional, data from the Institute for the Conservation of Nature and Forests (ICNF).

New fires, meanwhile, broke out in southeastern France on Sunday, with 350 hectares burned in Gard where a [firefighter](#) was seriously injured, and 35 hectares near Marseille hit, causing the partial closures of motorways.

"Four firefighters are injured," announced Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin in a tweet about the [fire](#) which broke out around 3:00 pm in a [pine forest](#) in the town of Aubais, south of Nimes.

One of them was "seriously injured" and had to be evacuated by helicopter to the Montpellier hospital centre for burns to the hands and face.

The others were more slightly injured following a reversal of the flames by the wind which partly destroyed their vehicle, Eric Agrinier, who coordinated the operations, told AFP.

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