

# France moves to ban smoking in woodlands to combat growing climate-related risk of mega fires

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Firefighters battle a large fire at Chiberta forest in Anglet, southwestern France, Thursday, July 30, 2020. French lawmakers have voted to ban smoking in all forests and woods during the fire season, part of a series of proposed measures to tackle growing destruction and dangers from climate change-related blazes.

Credit: AP Photo/Bob Edme, File

French lawmakers have voted to ban smoking in all forests and woods during the fire season, part of a series of proposed measures to tackle growing destruction and dangers from climate change-related blazes.

National Assembly lawmakers voted 197-0 in a first reading on Wednesday night of a proposed law to better prevent and tackle forest fires. The draft has already passed through the Senate.

An amendment also adopted by lawmakers would ban smoking in or near all forests and woods when authorities deem the fire-risk to be elevated. The fire season that was commonly in summer is now extending to other months in drought-hit areas of southern France and other parts of Europe where climate warming poses the greatest risks.

France's firefighters have already battled woodland-destroying blazes that started unusually early this year. Droughts that hit France last year have been compounded by shortages of rain this past winter, leaving tinder-dry woodlands at even greater risk.

The [smoking ban](#) will build on an existing forest law that already bans the lighting of fires within 200 meters of wooded areas. It aims to reduce the risk of fires started by discarded cigarettes—a frequent cause of blazes, especially when woodlands are tinder-dry. The government says [human activity](#) is by far the most frequent trigger of [forest fires](#) in France, responsible for 90% of blazes.

Lawmaker Anthony Brosse, who proposed the smoking amendment, said it would make the legislation clearer for French citizens.

Senators and National Assembly lawmakers will work next on a final draft of the proposed law before its expected adoption.

Forest fires have long regularly afflicted France, one of the most wooded

countries in Europe. But they generally used to start later in the year. Major wildfires in Europe are now starting earlier, becoming more frequent and harder to stop, and doing more damage. Scientists say they'll likely get worse as climate change intensifies. The Mediterranean region is warming faster than the [global average](#).

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