

Athens chokes in clouds of Sahara dust

March 28 2024



Southerly winds have carried waves of dust from Africa across the Mediterranean to Athens.

Athenians are choking in clouds of thick dust blown in from the Sahara along with unseasonably warm weather, weather forecasters and doctors warned on Thursday.

The [haze](#) covering the Greek capital comes from southerly winds that blow dust from North Africa across the eastern Mediterranean from March to April, the head of the Greek meteorological service Theodoros Kolydas said on X, formerly Twitter.

"A typical sandstorm with a range of 200 kilometers (about 120 miles) carries 20 to 30 million metric tons of dust and sometimes as much as 100 million," he wrote.

The city regularly experiences such sandstorms but the current one is accompanied by unusually high spring temperatures, heightening the choking effect.

Wednesday saw the highest March temperature in central Athens since 2009 -- 25.3 degrees Celsius (77.5 Fahrenheit).

Further south on the island of Crete, the temperature reached 32 Celsius.

The Greek Pulmonologists' Union advised asthma sufferers and other [vulnerable people](#) to avoid "unnecessary movements and [outdoor sports](#) during the times of highest dust concentration".

It warned that the dust can be mixed with pollen, bacteria and fungi, "a highly toxic mixture that is dangerous for the human body, particularly the respiratory system".

Scientists say [climate change](#) caused by human burning of fossil fuels is raising the risk of extreme weather events, including heat waves and droughts.

The weather service said the dust clouds were expected to dissipate from Friday.

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Citation: Athens chokes in clouds of Sahara dust (2024, March 28) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-03-athens-clouds-sahara.html>

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