

Fires near Athens under control as new blazes rage in Greece

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A firefighter works to extinguish a wildfire in Keratea, near Athens, on the weekend.

Forest fires that raged near Athens over the weekend have been brought under control, firefighters said Monday, but fresh blazes sprang up

elsewhere as authorities warned of a difficult fire season ahead.

Fanned by [strong winds](#) of up to 70 kilometers (43 miles) per hour and dry conditions, two fires broke out Sunday in the seaside resort of Keratea, east of Athens, and the wooded suburb of Stamata.

Authorities evacuated residents and a 45-year-old man died of [cardiac arrest](#) while trying to flee the flames in Stamata, police said.

The flames destroyed several houses and cars.

By Monday, [firefighters](#) had brought most of the flames under control, said fire department spokesperson Vasilis Vathrakogiannis.

"The fires were contained by firefighters, supported on Sunday by water bombers and helicopters, who fought in very dangerous conditions," he said.

He added that the easing of the winds had helped control most of the fires across the country.

A wildfire that ignited Saturday afternoon in the area of Mount Parnitha—known as "the lungs of Athens"—was brought under control Saturday evening with the help of reinforcements from other regions as well as volunteer firefighters.

But more fires were igniting, with the Greek fire brigade recording 52 new blazes on Monday.

The worst of the fires was raging on the Aegean island of Chios, where 142 firefighters, seven planes and three helicopters were deployed to try put out the flames, Vathrakogiannis said.

Two firefighters were lightly injured in the operation, he added.

On the island of Kos, popular with foreign tourists, more than 100 firefighters and eight aircraft were deployed to battle another blaze.

Authorities there called on residents and visitors to evacuate several areas threatened by flames.

The island's mayor, Theodosios Nikitaras, said on Facebook that [public buildings](#) could accommodate residents and visitors fleeing the fires.

Greece, a tourist hotspot, faces a tough wildfire season after its warmest winter and earliest heat wave on record, with temperatures hitting 44 degrees Celsius (111 degrees Fahrenheit) in June.

Praising the fire service's work, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said that the Mount Parnitha and Stamata blazes had burnt fewer than 100 hectares (247 acres).

But he warned that the Mediterranean country had "now entered the heart of the [fire](#) season", calling on Greeks to do their bit to prevent blazes.

"The fight against fires will continue... it will certainly not be won without the help of citizens," Mitsotakis told a cabinet meeting.

Scientists warn that fossil fuel emissions caused by humans are worsening the length and intensity of heat waves around the world.

Rising temperatures are leading to extended wildfire seasons and increasing the area burnt by the blazes, according to the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

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