

Greece fights dozens of wildfires in 'most difficult day of year'

July 1 2024



Greece faces a tough wildfire season after its warmest winter and earliest heat wave on record.

Firefighters were battling a series of wildfires near the Greek capital Athens on Sunday evening, as the country braces for another scorching

summer.

Greece faces a tough wildfire season after its warmest winter and earliest heat wave on record, with temperatures hitting 44°C (111°F).

"Today in Attica two extremely dangerous fires that broke out in residential areas and spread rapidly due to [strong winds](#) in Keratea and Stamata were tackled", Climate Crisis and Civil Protection Minister Vasilis Kikilias said late on Sunday.

He said there was no longer an active front in Stamata, north of Athens, though there were some minor reignitions in the eastern area of Keratea.

He said "ground forces will remain in the field throughout the night".

Since Sunday midday, the authorities have called for the evacuation of at least eight areas near the capital, with flames destroying cars and houses.

Ert channel reported that a 45-year-old-man died from a [cardiac arrest](#) while trying to flee fires in suburban Athens.

According to the police, the man was found unconscious in the yard of a house in Rodopoli and taken to hospital where he died.

"Today is the hardest that the Fire Brigade has faced in this year's firefighting season," [fire](#) department spokesperson Vasilis Vathrakogiannis said on Sunday afternoon, during an emergency press briefing.



Greece is battling dozens of wildfires -- one at Mount Parnitha, known as "the lungs of Athens" was brought under control late Saturday .

"The situation is very difficult, as strong winds continue to blow, they have not subsided and the outbreaks are many," the mayor of Lavreotiki, Dimitris Loukas, told Athens News Agency Sunday afternoon.

However he said a nearby military air base was not currently in danger from the flames.

Fire brigade spokesman noted that [wind speeds](#) had exceeded 60 km per hour in Keratea, while in Stamata, the blaze was fanned by strong northerly winds exceeding 70 km an hour.

Island fires

A fire also broke out Sunday in an industrial zone in Ritsona, near the island of Evia.

Black smoke filled the sky above Ritsona after the fire started in a recycling factory, burning various flammable materials that were in the grounds around it, including tires and mattresses.

Firefighters are fighting to prevent the flames from spreading beyond the recycling plant to other factories in the area.

The fire also approached a refugee center, but the Athens News Agency reported that this was not believed to be in danger.



Residents told to evacuate from six areas near the capital Athens.

Separately, a large wildfire broke out on Serifos island on Saturday afternoon, but was also brought under control by firefighters early Sunday.

"All of southwestern Serifos has burned. We are talking about an area where the fire stopped at the sea," Serifos mayor Konstantinos Revintis told MEGA TV.

The fire caused damage to houses, cottages, warehouses and chapels, according to the mayor.

The Fire Danger Forecast Map issued for Sunday by the Civil Protection Ministry predicted a very high category 4 risk of fire for Attica, the Peloponnese, Crete, the North and South Aegean Regions, and central Greece.

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

More than forty wildfires erupted across Saturday in Greece with wind speeds exceeding 100 kilometers (62 miles) per hour, according to fire brigade sources.

Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis called on Greeks to brace for a difficult wildfire season in his weekly Facebook post on Sunday.

"The difficult times are still ahead of us. Our effort is continuous. In this effort, our allies are new tools that build a new culture of prevention and responsibility," he said.

© 2024 AFP

Citation: Greece fights dozens of wildfires in 'most difficult day of year' (2024, July 1) retrieved 20 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-07-greece-dozens-wildfires-difficult-day.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--