

EU sends water bomber planes to fight Madeira wildfires

August 22 2024



More than 100 firefighters are battling the blaze on two main fronts on the island.

The European Union said Thursday that two water bomber planes were headed for the Atlantic island of Madeira to bolster firefighting efforts

following an emergency request from the Portuguese government.

A European Commission spokesman told reporters a request for help under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism was received Wednesday evening, and that in response two firefighting aircraft were being deployed from Spain from the EU's strategic reserve.

"These aircraft are on their way already, and they are to reach Madeira in the next few hours," said the spokesman, Balazs Ujvari. "They will contribute to the ongoing efforts pursued by the [local authorities](#) in a very challenging terrain."

He noted that the EU had last week activated its Copernicus satellite system at Portugal's request, to help monitor the blaze which has raged for a week and threatens a UNESCO-listed forest.

"The commission will of course, continue to observe the situation on the ground, and we are ready to mobilise additional assistance if needed," Ujvari said.

The [fire](#) had burned an area of 4,937 hectares (12,199 acres) of land by Wednesday midday, the Copernicus observatory said on X. It said 545 hectares had burned in the previous 24 hours.

Around 150 [firefighters](#) have been battling the blaze on two main fronts on the island of Madeira, which is traditionally packed with summer tourists at this time.

The fire started in the Ribeira Brava district and spread to the nearby Camara de Lobos and Ponta do Sol districts in the southern part of the island.

Thousands of hectares of vegetation were lost in a wildfire last year on

Madeira and at least three people were killed in a 2016 wildfire near the main city of Funchal.

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Citation: EU sends water bomber planes to fight Madeira wildfires (2024, August 22) retrieved 23 August 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-08-eu-bomber-planes-madeira-wildfires.html>

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