

Deadliest wildfires in the United States since the 1990s

12 November 2018



A power line catches fire as the Woolsey fire burns on both sides of Pacific Coast Highway (Highway 1) in Malibu, California, as night falls on November 9, 2018

Wildfires raging in California are among the deadliest recorded in the United States, with at least 31 people killed in the state as 250,000 flee their homes.

The largest and most destructive of the blazes is the "Camp Fire" in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains, which started on November 9 and has claimed 29 lives.

This death toll matches the highest previously recorded for a single [wildfire](#) in the United States, when 29 people died fighting a blaze at Griffith Park in Los Angeles County in 1933.

The United States is regularly struck by wildfires in its dry late summer months. Here is a look back at some of the most deadly since the 1990s:

2018: 10 die in two blazes

A [fire](#) that starts late July near the city of Redding in northern California rages for six weeks and

claims the lives of eight people, three of them firefighters.

Called the "Carr Fire," it razes more than 1,000 homes, forcing the evacuation of 40,000 people.

The "Mendocino Complex" that starts days later southwest of the city is on August 7 declared to be the largest fire in California's recorded history. It eventually burns through nearly 460,000 acres (186,000 hectares), according to local authorities, and claims two lives.

2017: 42 dead in California

California is ravaged by around 20 wildfires from early October that go on to claim 42 lives over the month, most of them in wine-producing Sonoma County, just north of San Francisco, where 22 die.

As many as 11,000 firefighters—some from as far away as Australia—are involved in battling the blazes which burn through more than 245,000 acres, force the evacuation of 100,000 people and destroy about 10,000 buildings.

2016: 13 killed in tourist area

A fire breaks out late November in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, a popular tourist area straddling the border of southeastern US states Tennessee and North Carolina, and rapidly spreads, pushed by strong winds and tornadoes.

Thirteen people are killed, 12 directly related to the blaze and one of a heart attack while fleeing, authorities say.

2013: 19 firefighters

The rapidly spreading Yarnell Hill fire, which starts in the southwestern state of Arizona late June, claims the lives of 19 firefighters in a single afternoon on June 30 when it explodes into a

firestorm.

It is the biggest loss of life among firefighters since the September 11, 2001 attacks.

2003: 22 people die

Over 10 days in October fires tear through parched southern California, destroying towns and killing at least 22 people, most around San Diego and San Bernardino and two across the border in Mexico.

An army of 14,500 firefighters is called in to battle the 17 wildfires that ravage 750,000 acres of land, obliterating around 2,500 houses.

2000: 13 killed as six states burn

Over July and August in 2000, 13 people die as dozens of fires burn in six states—California, Idaho, Florida, Nevada, Montana and Wyoming.

Idaho and Montana are the hardest hit with 1.2 million acres ablaze. Among the dead are two prisoners in a volunteer firefighting squad in Utah.

1994: 20 firemen

Wildfires that burn in the western United States over four weeks from early July 1994 claim the lives of 20 firefighters and ravage hundreds of thousands of acres of land in several [states](#), including California, Montana and Utah.

The heaviest toll is recorded on July 6, when 14 firefighters are killed after being trapped by flames at Glenwood Springs in Colorado.

1991: 25 die, again in California

Over a couple of days in October 1991, 25 people are killed in a wildfire that starts in the hills of California, above the town of Oakland, going on to destroy close to 3,000 buildings.

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