

CRISIS IN FLAMES: SOUTHERN EUROPE 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

August 2025 has brought Southern Europe into one of its worst wildfire emergencies on record, as Greece, Italy, and Spain confront unprecedented blazes amid extreme heat and drought. Record-breaking temperatures—often surpassing 40°C—have created tinderbox conditions from the western Greek islands to the volcanic slopes of Mount Vesuvius and Spain’s heartland.

In Greece, intense fires have swept through Attica, Crete, and Kefalonia, forcing mass evacuations from both residential zones and tourist destinations. In Italy, more than 50 fires erupted in the Campania region, severely threatening Mount Vesuvius National Park and nearby communities, while in Spain, the provinces of Ávila, Cáceres, Pontevedra, and Cádiz saw several thousand hectares consumed, endangering villages and historic heritage sites. Thousands have been displaced, at least three fatalities have occurred, and local hospitals have reported numerous cases of burns and respiratory distress. Tourism has suffered massive cancellations and closures, with resorts, hotels, and key travel routes abruptly shut down, straining local economies and generating reputational damage. Many small businesses have incurred direct physical losses or remain shuttered during the usually profitable summer season.

The scale and speed of these wildfires, amplified by climate change, highlight acute vulnerabilities across human, economic, and natural systems. The situation demands coordinated risk management, rapid response, and robust mitigation to protect lives, livelihoods, and ecosystems as Southern Europe endures this historic wildfire crisis.

CAUSES

The ongoing severe wildfires across Spain, Portugal, and Greece in August 2025 are primarily driven by a combination of extreme weather and environmental conditions. Record-breaking heatwaves with temperatures often exceeding 40°C, coupled with prolonged drought that has severely dried out vegetation and soil moisture, have created highly combustible landscapes prone to ignition and rapid fire spread. Strong and gusty winds further exacerbate the situation by accelerating fire movement and complicating containment efforts.

These climatic extremes are compounded by a confluence of factors including dense, dry forest fuels, challenging terrain, and in some cases, human activities that raise fire risk such as negligence or arson. The persistence of these weather conditions with little relief makes controlling and extinguishing wildfires difficult, leading to the extensive and prolonged wildfire season currently being experienced in the region.

WILDFIRE IN GREECE

Several wildfires have been burning in Greece since 8 August, particularly in the southern Attica region, and in the Western Greece region. According to the Greek Civil Protection, as of 8 August, one person died in Keratea town, in East Attica, and hundreds of people have been evacuated from the area, temporary shelters have been set up for those affected.

In the Western Greece region, Hrakleia, Lajoi, Grammatikos and Pournari settlements have been evacuated.

On 8 August, Greece requested assistance via the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) for aerial firefighting means to support the response efforts. The request for assistance was closed the following day as Greece informed they can cope with the situation.



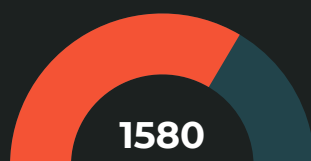
Scope and Intensity of Wildfires

Greece has faced some of the most destructive and widespread wildfires in Southern Europe during August 2025. Extreme heatwaves, persistent drought, and strong winds have created conditions for rapid ignition and uncontrollable spread. Primary affected regions include:

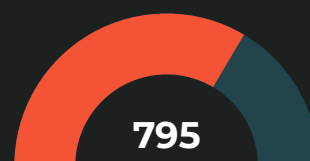
- **Patras & Western Achaia (Peloponnese):** Over 20 villages evacuated. Homes, farms, and factories have been damaged; major highways and industrial facilities closed. Even ancient sites, like Voudeni, have been under direct threat.
- **Epirus (Ziros Municipality):** Fires along a 30km front. Losses encompass homes, livestock, and widespread power outages; evacuations include local populations and a refugee facility.
- **Greek Islands – Chios, Zakynthos, Kefalonia:** Evacuations of entire coastal zones and hotel districts have been ordered as fires threaten both residential and business areas. Tourists have been relocated to shelters.
- **Other Affected Regions:** Vonitsa, Arta, Preveza, Aitoliko suffered significant outbreaks, particularly impacting agricultural sectors like olive farming.

National weather agencies have placed much of mainland Greece and the islands under sustained **red/amber fire and heat alerts**, with access restrictions to forests and natural parks.

Hectres Burnt:

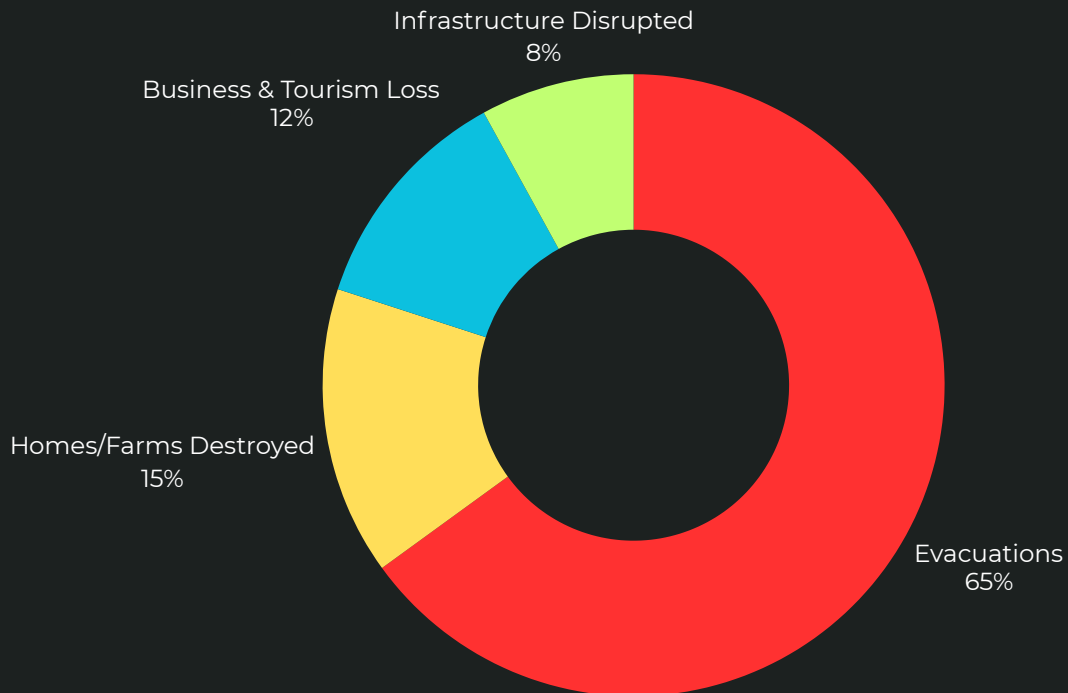


Keratea Wildfire



Herakleia Wildfire

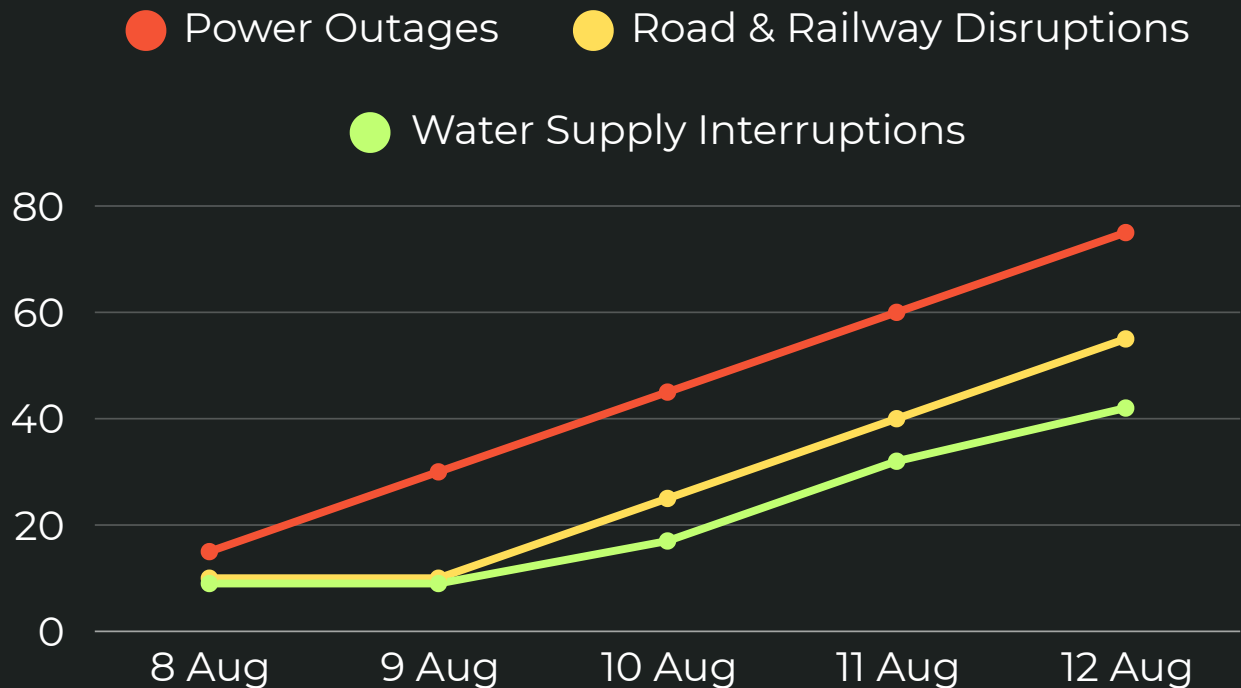
Scope and Intensity of Wildfires



Interpretations:

- The greatest impact was on populations forced to evacuate their homes and communities, making up 65% of the reported effects in this period.
- Direct losses to homes, farms (including olive groves, agricultural land), and physical assets accounted for 15%.
- Disruption to business and tourism — including closures, cancellations, and physical damage — contributed 12% of the overall impact.
- Damage and interruption of infrastructure (roads, power supply, public services) made up 8%.
- While fatalities occurred, their proportional statistical share for this period is nearly 0% due to the much larger population affected.

Effects on Infrastructure and Environment



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Measures and Advisories from Authorities

- Greek government issued very high wildfire risk warnings across much of the country, with many regions—such as Attica, Peloponnese, Western Greece, Epirus, Thessaly, Central Greece, and several islands—under extreme fire danger alerts (Category 4 to 5). Authorities continued to enforce strict prevention measures, including bans on outdoor burning, use of machinery that could spark fires, and restrictions on public access to forests and vulnerable natural areas.
- Firefighters battled more than 100 active wildfires fueled by intense heat (temperatures up to 34°C in some areas), strong winds, and prolonged drought conditions. Large-scale evacuations remained in effect, particularly around the western city of Patras, with over 7,700 residents displaced near that area alone. Additional evacuations were ordered on islands such as Chios and Zakynthos, where tourist resorts and coastal villages faced serious threats.
- The Greek Ministry of Climate Crisis & Civil Protection and fire services urged residents and visitors to remain vigilant, comply with evacuation orders, and stay informed via official channels such as the Emergency Communication Service and social media accounts like @112Greece. Hospitals reported multiple cases of smoke inhalation and burns, including firefighters injured in the response efforts.
- Emergency resources deployed included nearly 5,000 firefighters and 33 firefighting aircraft, but strong winds and hot, dry conditions made containment difficult. Public advisories emphasized avoiding activities that could ignite fires and following heat safety guidance such as hydration and limiting outdoor exposure.

Firefighters Deployed:

5000

Active Wildfire Fonts:

100+

Firefighting Aircraft:

33

Alerts Issued for Major Areas:

10+

Residents Evacuated:

7700+

WILDFIRE IN PORTUGAL

Portugal is enduring one of its most severe wildfire seasons in recent memory, with extreme heatwaves and prolonged drought creating ideal conditions for large-scale fires. Temperatures have exceeded 40°C across much of the country, rapidly drying vegetation and reducing moisture levels in forests and agricultural land. These conditions, combined with gusty winds, have led to multiple simultaneous fire outbreaks, particularly in the northern and central regions, stretching firefighting resources to their limits.

Major incidents are ongoing in the Vila Real, Trancoso, and Covilhã regions, where thousands of hectares have been consumed. The Vila Real district has seen days-long fires threatening villages such as Palhais and Reboleiro, prompting mass evacuations. In Trancoso, a blaze near Freches has burned over 7,000 acres, while Covilhã's mountainous terrain has complicated suppression efforts. Overall, Portugal has lost over 41,600 hectares to fire so far in 2025 — nearly triple the damage at this time last year — with around 2,800 firefighters, hundreds of ground units, and dozens of aircraft engaged in continuous operations.

The impact is severe on both communities and the environment. Villages have been evacuated, homes and farmland destroyed, and local economies — especially agriculture, forestry, and tourism — have been disrupted. Environmental losses include the destruction of biodiversity-rich areas and long-term damage to natural habitats. The Portuguese government has extended a national fire alert status, enforced strict bans on high-risk activities, and deployed additional resources through the National Authority for Emergency and Civil Protection (ANEPC). However, with high temperatures and dry conditions forecast to continue, the risk remains extreme, making vigilance and preparedness essential across the country.

Major Fire Incidents and Affected Areas

Vila Real District (Northern Portugal):

- Fires have persisted for over ten days with several large and active fronts. Villages such as Palhais, Reboleiro, Aldeia Nova, and Aldeia Velha have been threatened. Significant evacuations have been ordered to protect residents. Over 1,300 firefighters and 16 aircraft have been mobilized here.

Trancoso Municipality (Central Portugal):

- A major fire near the village of Freches has burned over 7,000 acres. The fire threatened multiple nearby villages and has involved over 650 firefighters, 226 vehicles, and six helicopters in containment efforts. Several injuries including firefighters have been reported.

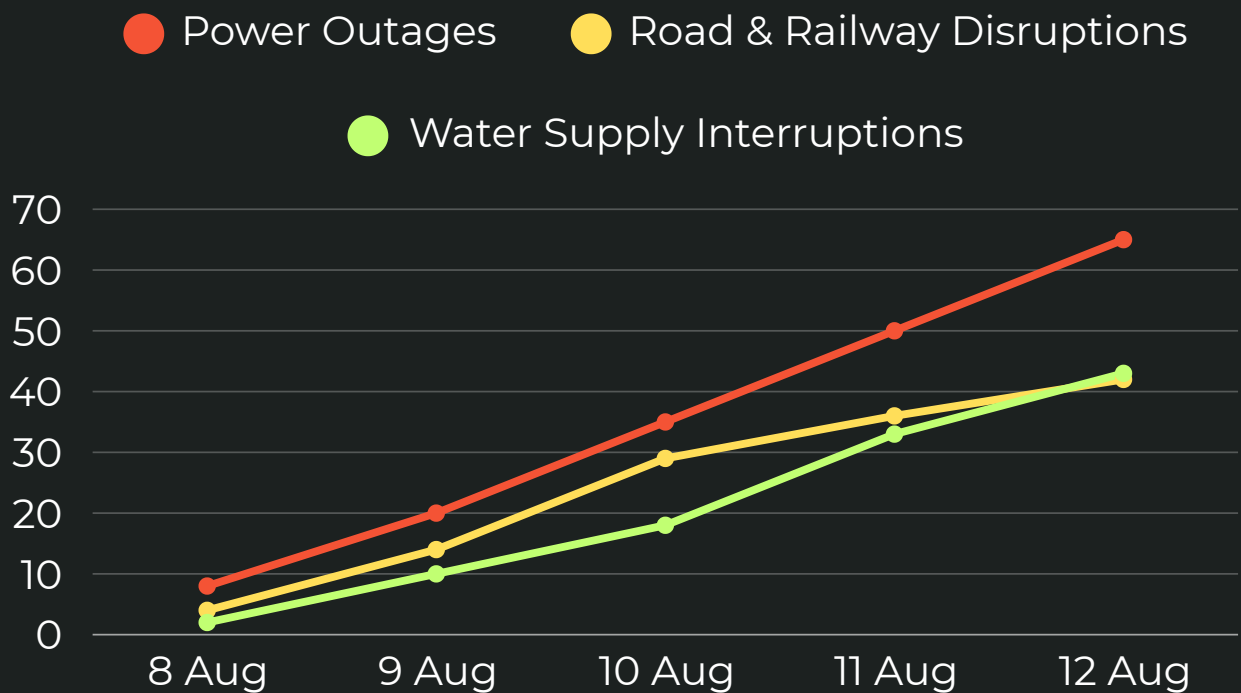
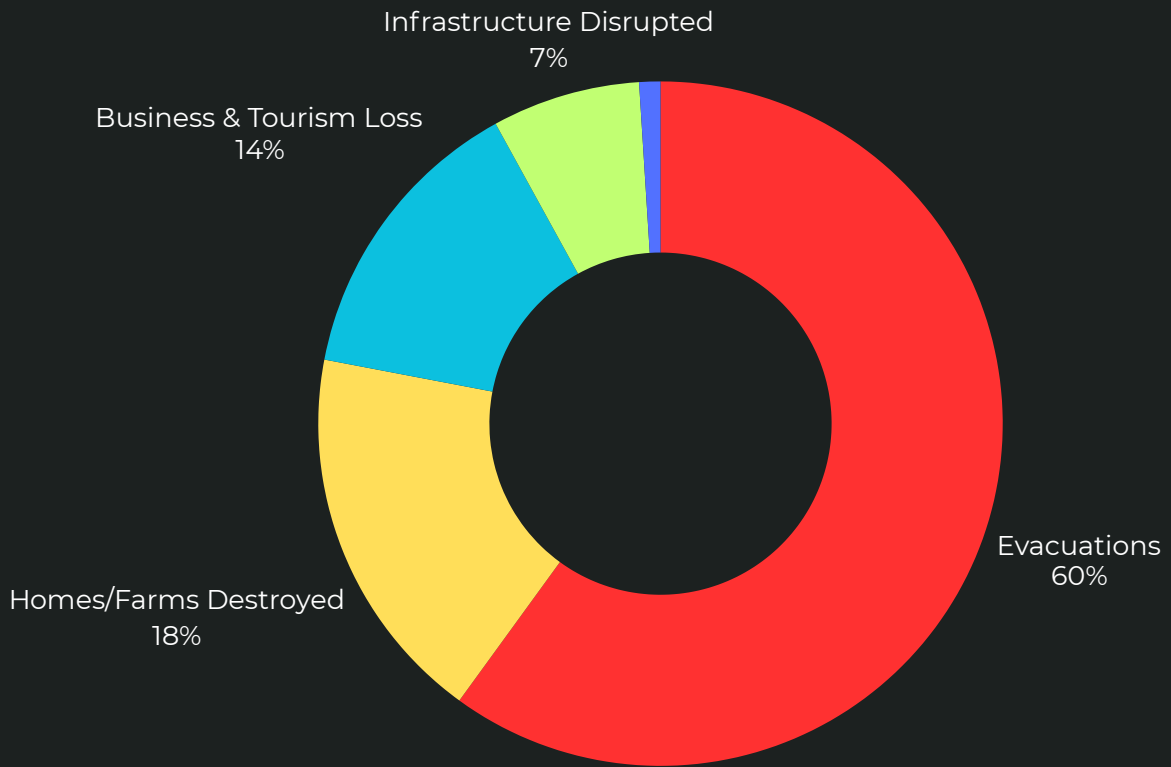
Covilhã Municipality (Central Portugal):

- Fires near Sobral de São Miguel led to deployment of nearly 400 firefighters. The situation showed tentative improvement but remained active as of mid-August.

Viana do Castelo, Braga, and Surrounding Areas:

- Multiple active fires reported, requiring continuous firefighting operations.

Intensity and Impact of Wildfires



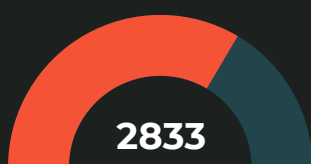
Advisories and Measures

The Portuguese government has sustained a national fire alert status until August 13, due to extreme heat and deteriorating wildfire conditions. Strict bans remain in place on outdoor fires, burning vegetation, use of spark-producing machinery, bonfires, and fireworks to prevent new ignitions. These preventive measures have been crucial in reducing fire outbreak points despite ongoing challenges caused by high temperatures and strong winds.

Authorities have enforced mandatory evacuations in high-risk villages and towns, with coordinated efforts by law enforcement and civil protection teams to ensure safe and orderly relocation of residents. Continuous patrols and firefighting operations are active across the most affected northern and central regions, where multiple large fires remain uncontained. Emergency responders include approximately 2,000 firefighters supported by hundreds of vehicles and more than a dozen aircraft, emphasizing a large-scale mobilization to control flames and protect communities.

Additionally, the National Authority for Emergency and Civil Protection (ANEPC) is leading public awareness campaigns urging citizens to avoid dangerous activities, remain alert, and follow official communications closely. The government is also advancing a long-term Forest Intervention Plan to enhance wildfire prevention and response resilience. Together, these measures reflect a robust, multi-level effort to manage Portugal's intense wildfire crisis amid escalating heatwave and dry conditions.

Hectres Burnt:



Trancoso Municipality fire

Firefighters Deployed:

2800

Firefighting Vehicles:

900

Aircrafts Engaged

11

WILDFIRE IN SPAIN

In August 2025, Spain is grappling with a severe wildfire crisis driven by an extreme heatwave with temperatures reaching up to 45°C. The country faces multiple large fires across several regions, including Castilla y León, Galicia, Madrid, Extremadura, Andalucía, and Cádiz. These fires are fueled by the combination of intense heat, strong winds, and prolonged drought, creating highly susceptible conditions for rapid fire spread. Nearly the entire country is under extreme or very high wildfire risk alerts.

Key affected areas include Galicia's Ourense province, where six active fires have consumed over 10,000 hectares, and the Chandrexa de Queixa fire itself exceeds 3,500 hectares, leading to evacuations of multiple villages. Castilla y León has witnessed significant fires, such as the Molezuelas de la Carballeda which caused evacuation of thousands and widespread damage. The Madrid region, particularly Tres Cantos and Soto de Viñuelas, has dealt with a fire burning about 1,500 hectares, destroying homes and critical facilities and resulting in at least one firefighter fatality. Andalucía's Cádiz province has also experienced fires near tourist zones, prompting evacuations and closures of popular beaches. Other regions including Asturias, Castilla-La Mancha, Toledo, and Cáceres are contending with active fire fronts causing disruptions.

The human toll includes at least six fatalities and over 5,000 evacuees from affected areas. Economic impacts are profound, with extensive damage to homes, farms, forests, and tourism infrastructure. Emergency services are stretched thin, deploying thousands of firefighters, military personnel, aerial support, and machinery. Authorities enforce strict bans on activities that could ignite fires and restrict access to vulnerable forests and parks. The ongoing fires threaten biodiversity and natural reserves as well as public health due to degraded air quality from smoke. Coordinated emergency response and long-term wildfire mitigation efforts are crucial as Spain confronts one of its most challenging wildfire seasons amid extreme climatic conditions.

Major Fire Incidents and Affected Areas

Galicia (Ourense Province):

- Six active fires are currently affecting over 10,000 hectares. The Chandrexa de Queixa fire alone has burned more than 3,500 hectares, prompting evacuations of multiple villages.

Castilla y León (León, Zamora, Palencia):

- The Molezuelas de la Carballeda fire has forced evacuation of around 4,300 residents. Fires in Zamora and León provinces have caused injuries and structural damage, with road closures and disrupted services.

Madrid Region (Tres Cantos, Soto de Viñuelas):

- A severe fire burned approximately 1,500 hectares, destroyed homes and facilities including the King's College campus, and caused a fatality of a volunteer firefighter trapped while creating firebreaks.

Andalucía (Cádiz, Tarifa):

- Wildfires near tourist beaches have led to evacuations of about 2,000 residents and closures of popular visitor areas.

Other Regions:

- Fires in Asturias, Castilla-La Mancha, Toledo, and Cáceres continue with active fronts causing widespread disruption.

Residents Evacuated:

5000+

Firefighting Aircrafts:

26

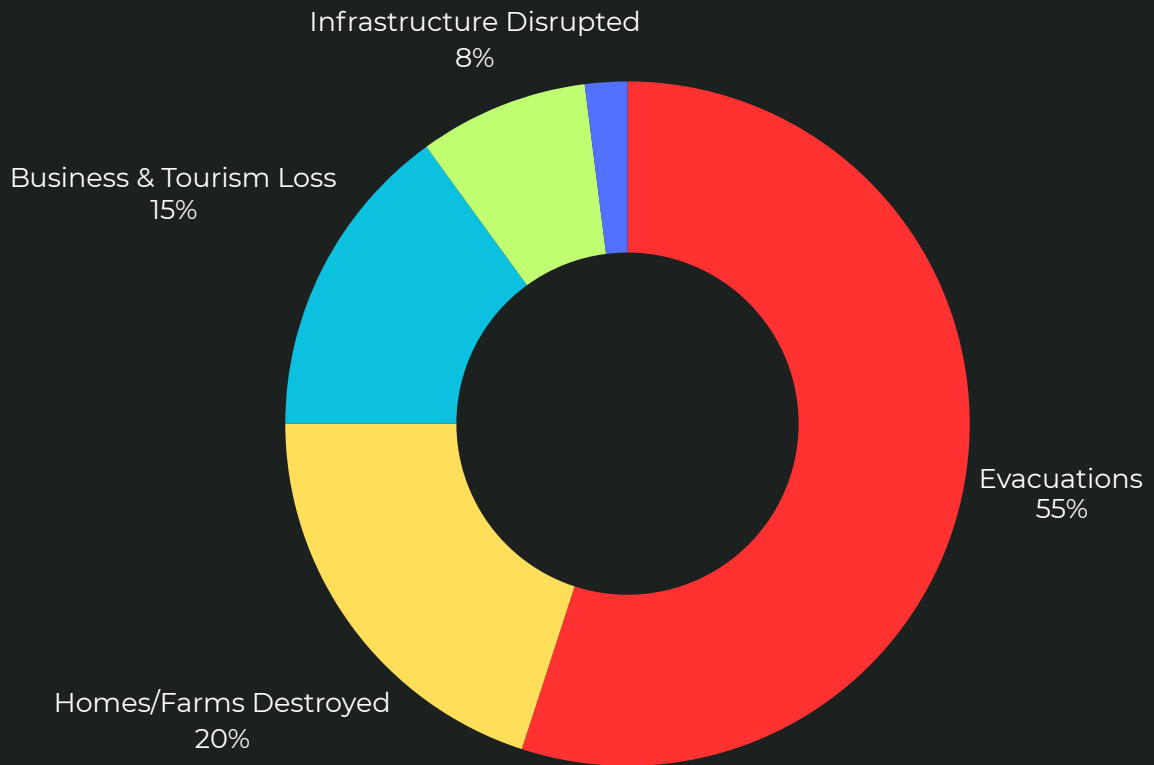
Firefighters Engaged

1000+

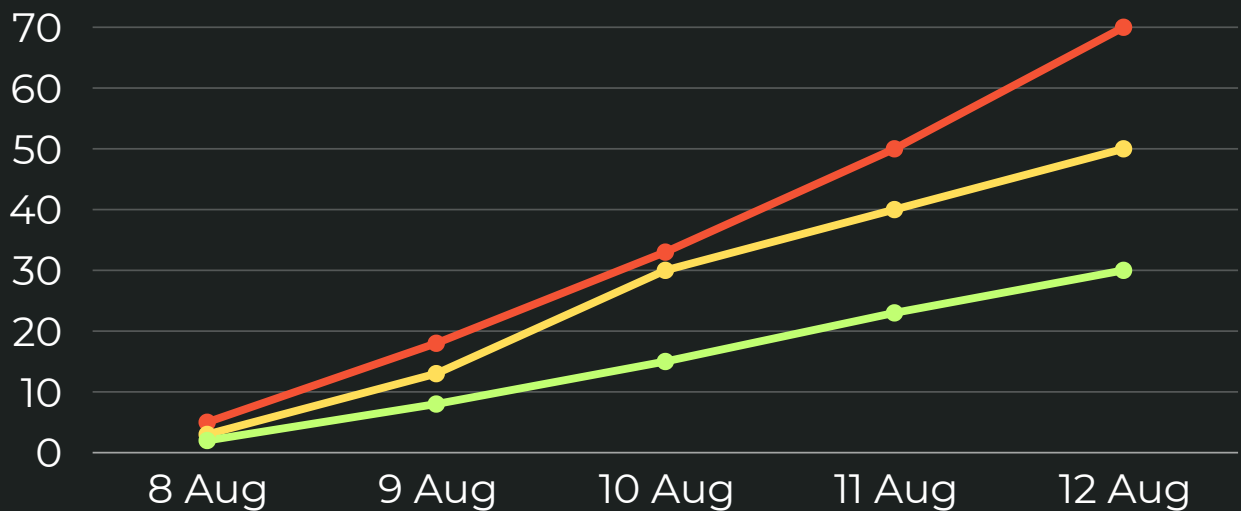
High Risk Zone Prepositioned by EU:

650

Intensity and Impact of Wildfires



● Power Outages ● Road & Railway Disruptions
● Water Supply Interruptions



Advisories and Measures

1. **Pre-emergency Phase Activation:** On August 12, 2025, Spain's Ministry of the Interior activated a pre-emergency phase to coordinate and reinforce state resources across the most affected regions, including Castilla y León, Navarra, Andalucía, Madrid, Castilla-La Mancha, and Galicia. This activation enables enhanced communication and resource deployment for rapid firefighting and emergency response.
2. **Massive Firefighting Deployment:** Approximately 1,000 personnel from the Military Emergency Unit (UME) and thousands of firefighters are deployed nationwide. Aerial firefighting resources and heavy machinery support ground teams in battling multiple large and active fires, particularly in high-risk areas. National coordination ensures an efficient allocation of resources amid the extreme heatwave and volatile fire conditions.
3. **Evacuation and Public Safety Orders:** Mandatory evacuations are in effect for thousands of residents across fire-affected zones such as Castilla y León, Madrid, Cádiz, Galicia, and Castilla-La Mancha. Authorities enforce strict bans on activities that could spark fires (such as burning vegetation and use of machinery prone to creating sparks). Public communications urge citizens to stay informed through official channels, follow evacuation directives, and exercise extreme caution.
4. **Fire Prevention and Preparedness Measures:** Spain has implemented new fire safety regulations for industrial and residential properties focusing on prevention, early detection, and rapid suppression. Public awareness campaigns emphasize clearing dry vegetation, creating defensible spaces, and avoiding risky behaviors during the heightened fire risk period. Government agencies continue monitoring weather forecasts, fire danger levels, and air quality advisories to adjust response strategies in real time.
5. **European Union Support:** Spain benefits from EU-wide wildfire preparedness programs, including the prepositioning of nearly 650 firefighters from across Europe in high-risk zones, availability of 22 firefighting airplanes and 4 helicopters, and an EU wildfire support team coordinating analysis and response efforts during the summer peak.

FORECAST AND ADVICE

Forecast:

Wildfires in Spain, Portugal, and Greece are projected to remain intense over the next several weeks, driven by persistent extreme heat with daily highs nearing or exceeding 40°C, entrenched drought conditions, and periodic strong winds. These factors will continue to create highly flammable environments, making ignition and rapid spread likely in both already-affected and currently stable but vulnerable areas.

Without significant rainfall or temperature relief, suppression efforts will face ongoing challenges. Firefighting resources are expected to remain stretched as multiple large and geographically dispersed fire fronts require simultaneous attention. The cumulative impacts on communities, infrastructure, agriculture, tourism, and ecosystems are likely to grow, further straining local and national economies.

Advice:

Authorities should sustain maximum emergency readiness by keeping firefighting teams, aircraft, and ground equipment at high deployment levels, ensuring rapid response to new fire outbreaks. Continuous enforcement of strict bans on risky activities — such as burning vegetation, using spark-producing machinery, or uncontrolled camping fires — is vital to prevent additional ignitions. Public alert systems and evacuation protocols must remain active and well-coordinated to safeguard lives.

For businesses and communities, immediate priorities include implementing continuity plans, protecting physical assets, and preparing for operational disruptions. In parallel, governments and private stakeholders should invest in fire-resilient infrastructure, fuel load management, and ecosystem restoration to improve long-term resilience. Proactive land use and emergency planning will help mitigate both present and future wildfire threats.

BUSINESS IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- **Operational Delays:** Businesses that rely on transportation for logistics, deliveries, and client meetings are likely to experience notable operational delays due to road closures and re-routing caused by the wildfires.
- **Localized Business Disruptions:** There is a moderate to high likelihood of localized disruptions for businesses in affected and neighboring areas, as fire-related transit restrictions impact both routine operations and customer access.
- **Supply Chain Interruptions:** Anticipate interruptions in regional transportation and logistics networks, with wildfire-related traffic congestion and damaged infrastructure delaying the delivery of goods and essential supplies. This can adversely affect companies dependent on just-in-time shipments or perishable inventories.
- **Transport of Goods & Essential Supplies:** The movement of freight and vital supplies to and from impacted regions is likely to be delayed, forcing businesses to seek alternative suppliers or routes and increasing operational costs.
- **Commuting and Employee Mobility:** Employees and business travelers may face rerouted journeys, increased travel times, or cancelled trips, complicating staff deployment and meeting schedules.
- **Widespread Supply Chain Risks:** Disruptions may cascade throughout interconnected supply chains, affecting not only the immediate region but also businesses in neighboring areas reliant on goods and materials sourced from affected zones.
- **Adaptation and Risk Management:** To mitigate these impacts, businesses should activate contingency logistics plans, maintain clear communications with suppliers and customers, and monitor ongoing developments for timely response to changing conditions.

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