Climate Fires

Trump Denies Reality And Ignores People Dying From Climate Fires In Blue States

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QUICK FACTS

- As of Sunday, September 14, there were 87 active large fires that have burned **4.6 million acres** across several western states and have **killed at least 35** people while Trump has **remained silent** for weeks.

- Climate change is driving the extreme wildfires we’re seeing this year. Just last month, a Stanford researcher **published a paper** linking California’s changing climate, including hotter temperatures and decreased precipitation to increased wildfires. **See below for more research on the links between climate change and fires.**

- Trump called climate change a “**hoax**” and continues to deny the science and lie about the impacts of climate change.

- The 2017, 2018, and 2019 western wildfire seasons caused **a combined $48 billion in damage and 163 deaths**. The human costs are also compounded by exposure to **toxic air pollution** from wildfire smoke.

- The number of acres that has already burned each season has **doubled since 1984**.
Happening Now:

- As of Sunday, September 14, there were 87 active large fires across the west.
  - The fires that are still active have burned **4.6 million acres**.
  - More than **6 million acres have burned** in total during the 2020 fire season so far.

- As of Monday morning (9/14), western wildfires have **killed at least 35**.

- Residents near 39 large fires in California, Oregon, Washington and Colorado **remain under evacuation orders**.

- Because of the fires, **four of the world’s 10 most polluted cities are in the West**: Portland, Oregon ranks #1, Seattle is #3, San Francisco is #6 and Los Angeles ranks #8.

- There are **34 active fires** across Oregon, **13 are considered large**, and **one million acres have burned** (twice the yearly average).

- In California, over 3.3 million acres have burned and currently, there are **44 active fires** with **25 designated as large**. The August Complex fire is only 28% contained and has already burned nearly 900,000 acres alone.

- Washington currently has **16 large fires** burning that have already scorched over 675,000 acres and has Seattle under a “**super-massive**” cloud of smoke.

This Is Happening Because Of Climate Change:

- Climate change is making conditions **hotter and drier**, exacerbating fire season and magnifying the devastating impacts of wildfires year after year.

- The **2018 National Climate Assessment** found “the area burned by wildfire from 1984 to 2015 was twice what would have burned had climate change not occurred.”

- A **NASA scientist** looking at 20 years of satellite data found “where warming and drying climate had increased the risk of fires, we’ve seen an increase in burning.”
Just last month, a Stanford researcher published a paper linking California’s changing climate, including hotter temperatures and decreased precipitation to increased wildfires.

Northern California summers are 2.5 degrees warmer than they were in the 1970s and are expected to heat up another 4.5 degrees by the end of the century.

As Park Williams, a bioclimatologist at Columbia University’s Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, explains “The climate-change connection is straightforward: Warmer temperatures dry out fuels. In areas with abundant and very dry fuels, all you need is a spark,”

A study published in 2015 found that climate change caused an 18.7% increase in average fire season length and doubled the area of the globe that is at risk for wildfires from 1979 to 2013.

**Trump Denies the Climate Crisis:**

Trump has a long history of calling climate change a “hoax.”

In 2018, thirteen different government agencies published a report that warned of climate change’s impacts, including the increasing risks of wildfires, yet Trump said “I don’t believe it.”

Trump has continued to lie about these wildfires, blaming California’s forest management and stating that these western states needed to “clean” their forest floors.

- Trump’s claims have been de-bunked repeatedly by fact checkers when he made these statements in previous wildfire seasons.

**It Hurts Real People:**

The 2017, 2018, and 2019 western wildfire seasons caused a combined $48 billion in damage and 163 deaths.

According to the NOAA, wildfires emit “substantial amounts” of toxic air pollutants.

The American Lung Association warns pollution in wildfire smoke “triggers asthma attacks, heart attacks and strokes—and can kill.

**It’s Getting Worse:**
• The number of acres that has already burned each season has doubled since 1984.

• The federal government's cost for fighting wildfires has grown over 10 times since 1985.

• Six of the largest 20 wildfires in California’s history have happened in late August and early September of 2020.

• According to a study published by Earth's Future in 2019, California wildfires have increase in size eightfold, burning an area nearly 500% bigger than in the 1970s.