

The Megafires of California reading passage

The Megafires of California

Drought, building growth, and an overabundance of fuel exacerbate the size and intensity of wildfires in the western United States.

Wildfires are becoming a growing threat in the western United States, with Southern California being the hardest-hit region. Even though they are more equipped than ever and have decades of experience fighting fires fueled by the 'Santa Ana Winds,' fire crews in Southern California are having a tough time suppressing the flames. The wildfires themselves, specialists say, are basically hotter, faster, and spread more erratically than in the past.

Megafires, also known as 'siege fires', are the increasingly frequent blazes that burn 500,000 acres or more - 10 times the size of the average forest fire of 20 years ago. According to state statistics and news reports, some recent wildfires are among the biggest ever in California in terms of acreage burned.

One explanation for the trend of more superhot fires is that the region, which usually has dry summers, has had significantly below normal precipitation in many recent years. The goal of the US Forest Service to extinguish wildfires as rapidly as possible, which dates back a century, is another factor, according to experts.

The unforeseen consequence has been to block the natural elimination of underbrush, which is now the principal fuel source for megafires. They note that three more reasons contribute to the tendency. The average annual temperature in the western United States has risen by 1 degree Fahrenheit due to climate change. The mean tenure of fire seasons is 78 days longer than it was twenty years ago. The third factor is increased housing development in forested regions. Dominik Kulakowski, adjunct professor of biology at the Clark University Graduate School of Geography in Worcester, Massachusetts, explains, "We are progressively constructing our dwellings in fire-prone habitats." In many forests in the western United States, doing so is analogous to constructing houses on the slope of an active volcano.

More residential housing is being constructed in California, where population growth has averaged more than 600,000 per year for at least a decade. According to Terry McHale of the California Department of Forestry firefighters' union, what was previously undeveloped land is now populated with dwellings that provide fuel for more intense flames. With so much drought, so many villages at risk of catching fire, and so many fronts to defend, the task seems virtually insurmountable.

Although some of the greatest fires in the state's history charred thousands of acres, destroyed thousands of houses, and killed a substantial number of people, many experts give California high credit for its preparedness improvements in recent years. Observers report that staff is addressing the unique issues posed by neighborhood and canyon-hopping flames more

effectively than in the past. Personnel has been criticized in the past for failing to contain fires that might have been contained.

State commitments to deliver more modern firefighting engines, aircraft, and helicopters have been met. Despite massive cuts to many other programs, money for firefighting has grown, and firefighters' unions are now hailing the state's dedication. They note that funding for firefighting has increased despite massive cuts to many other programs. Mr. McHale of the firefighters' union said, "We are glad that the current state administration has been quite aggressive in its support of us and has provided financial assistance for the infrastructural needs we have long desired."

In addition to funding the modernization of fire engines that must travel the vast state and serpentine canyon routes, the state has invested in improved command-and-control facilities and management systems. In past fire sieges, other jurisdictions and states were eager to give mutual-aid assistance, but we were unable to effectively communicate with them, according to Kim Zagaris, chief of the state's Office of Emergency Services Fire and Rescue Branch. As a result of a commission's review and revision of communications protocols, the state's reaction has become "far more professional and responsive," according to him. Government authorities and people agree that the speed, commitment, and coordination of firefighters from several states and jurisdictions are resulting in more efficiency than in previous 'siege fire' scenarios.

In recent years, Southern California has strengthened its construction standards, evacuation protocols, and acquisition of cutting-edge technologies. Randy Jacobs, a Southern California-based attorney who had to flee both his home and office to avoid wildfires, exclaims, "I am tremendously thrilled by the advances we have experienced." "Despite all the damage that "While we will continue to be inflicted by wildfires, we will no longer experience the loss of life we did in the past due to the fire prevention and firefighting tactics implemented," he adds.

The Megafires of California reading questions

Questions 1-6

Complete the notes below.

Choose one word and/or a number from the passage for each answer.

Write your answers in boxes 1-6 on your answer sheet.

Wildfires

characteristics of wildfires and wildfire conditions today compared to the past:

Occurrence: more frequent. temperature: hotter

Speed: faster

Movement: (1)... more unpredictably

Size of fires: (2)... greater on average than two decades ago

Reasons why wildfires cause more damage today compared to the past:

Rainfall: (3). erage

More brush to act as (4)...

Increase in yearly temperature

Extended fire (5).

More building of (6). ..in vulnerable places

Questions 7-11

Do the following statements agree with the information given in the reading passage?

In boxes 7-11 on your answer sheet, write

True if the statement agrees with the information.

False if the statement contradicts the information.

It is not given if there is no information on this

7. The amount of open space in California has diminished over the last ten years.
8. Many experts believe California has made little progress in readying itself to fight fires.
9. Personnel in the past have been criticized for mishandling fire containment.
10. California has replaced a range of firefighting tools.
11. more firefighters have been hired to improve fire-fighting capacity.

Questions 12 and 13

Answer the following questions:-

12. Who has improved building codes, evacuation procedures, and procurement of new technology?
13. Apart from investing money to upgrade the fire engines, what has the state invested in?