



Forest Fires in Bulgaria 2007

The forest lands in Bulgaria comprise of 4,089,762 hectares (ha) and occupy 37% of the territory of the country. 3,691,868 ha (89 %) of those are classified as wooded lands.

During the last seven years more than 100,000 ha of forests were affected by wildfires. 2007 was the second worst year in the history of the Bulgarian forests with 1,479 forest fires and 43,000 ha burned after the devastating fire season of 2000 (1,710 forest fires and 57,406 ha burned).

The peak of situation was in the period 19 to 30 July 2007. In that time the weekly averages of FWI for Bulgaria was the highest in Europe. Disaster situation was declared in 11 municipalities on the territory of five regions (Stara Zagora – 4, Lovech – 3, Haskovo – 2, Smolian 1, Pazardjik –1).

In year 2007 were clearly delineated typical for our country two peaks for the number of the fires. The first of them was in March and the second during July and August.

The main reasons for the forest fires during 2007 are as follows:

- Carelessness – 78%
- Deliberate or Arson – 5%
- Natural – 1%
- Unknown – 16%

The immediate loses for Bulgarian forests in 2007 are calculated on the amount of 5 million Euro (not including the budget for the restoration of the burned areas.

During the fire disaster 51 houses were burned, 21 families were evacuated, three persons died, 14 were affected, 6 of them were firefighters.

In the end of July 2007 Bulgaria requested assistance through:

- The EU Civil Protection Mechanisms / Monitoring and Information Center (MIC) – as a Member State
- NATO Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC) – as a Member State
- Russia – on the basis of a bilateral agreement

We received 3 proposals from:

EU – Offer from a private company
NATO – Assistance from the Republic of Turkey
Russia – Aircraft with crew

In the first days of August a firefighting aircraft Il-76 was sent from Russia to Bulgaria and operated in Stara Zagora and Haskovo regions.

During the summer of 2007 Greece requested assistance through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and by neighbor countries. In September 2007 Bulgaria deployed five fire trucks with 49 fire fighters to Greece.

Table 1. Forest fire statistics for Bulgaria for the period 1998-2007

Year	Total number of fires	Total burnt area (ha)	Burnt forest lands (ha)	Caused by human activities (number)	Natural causes (number)	Unknown causes (number)
1998	578	6,967	6,060	147	6	425
1999	320	8,291	4,198	84	9	227
2000	1,710	57,406	37,431	385	18	1,307
2001	825	20,152	18,463	187	19	619
2002	402	6,513	5,910	150	7	245
2003	452	5,000	4,284	281	9	162
2004	294	1,137	881	172	5	117
2005	241	1,456	1,456	125	7	109
2006	393	3,540	3,540	190	9	194
2007	1479	42,999	42,999	1163	18	298
Mean	669	15,346	12,522	288	11	370



Figures 1-3. Wildfire prevention and preparedness measures in Bulgaria include green fuel breaks in reforestation areas (left) and fire hazard (fuel) surveys in the different forest types. Photos: GFMC:

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Editorial Note

Readers are encouraged to download the report about the "Eastern European, Near East and Central Asian States Exercise on Wildland Fire Information and Resources Exchange 2005" (EASTEX FIRE 2005), which was hosted by Bulgaria, 20-22 April 2005 (IFFN No. 33, 6-9; online: http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/iffn/iffn_33/03-IFFN-33-EASTEX-FIRE-2005-Report.pdf)