



**MEDITERRANEAN IN FLAMES**  
**GREECE AND ITALY HAVE THE WORST PART**

*Photo: Fire in Peschici (Italy) in the south-east of the Apenina Peninsula last week. People were evacuated from the beaches near the fire with boat, and are now watching the fire descending.*

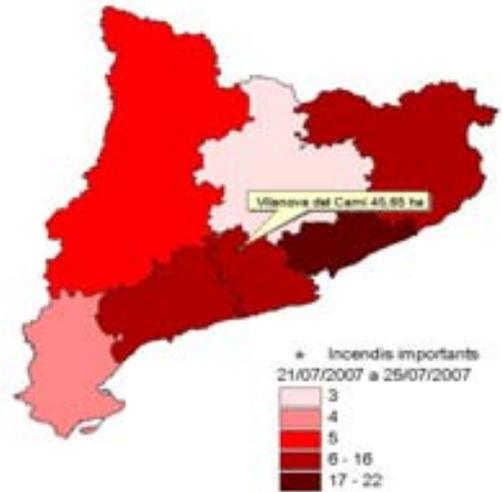
**What**

**we had**

**Trend's from the beginning of the year until:**

	26/07/2006	26/07/2007
Nº Fires (VA+VU+VF)	3878	3716
Surface (ha)	2618	1576 (*)

<sup>1</sup> VA: AGRICULTURAL VEGETATION  
 VU: URBAN VEGETATION  
 VF: FOREST VEGETATION  
 (\*)PROVISIONAL AREA WAITING FOR VALIDATION



**Number of fires (VA+VU+VF) from 21/07/07 until 25/07/07 and fires larger than >2 ha.**

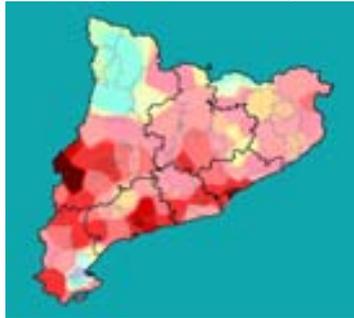
## Description of the situation

### Drought evolution (live fuels and coarse dead fuels availability)

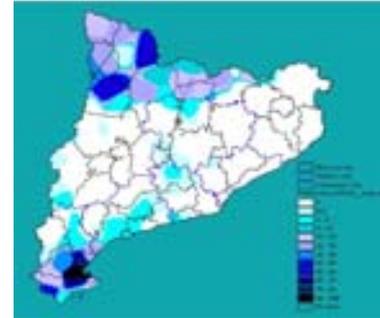
Accumulated drought is in low levels. Last rains were heavy but very localised in the Occidental Pirinees and southern littoral. The main effect of drought is the littoral, with scattered urbanizations and the area influenced by the North Wind. Coarse dead fuels are still less available than in other summer seasons, especially in the interior of the country.



**Fig. 3.** Accumulated drought (Drought Code index) of 24/07/06.



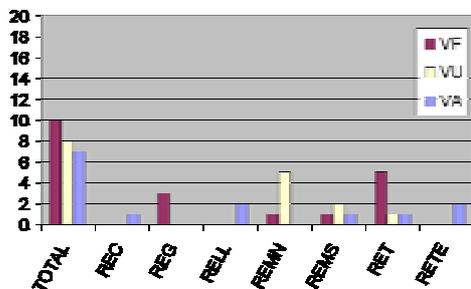
**Fig. 4.** Accumulated drought (Drought Code index) of 24/07/07.



**Fig. 5.** Accumulated rainfalls (mm) from 21 until 22/07/2007.

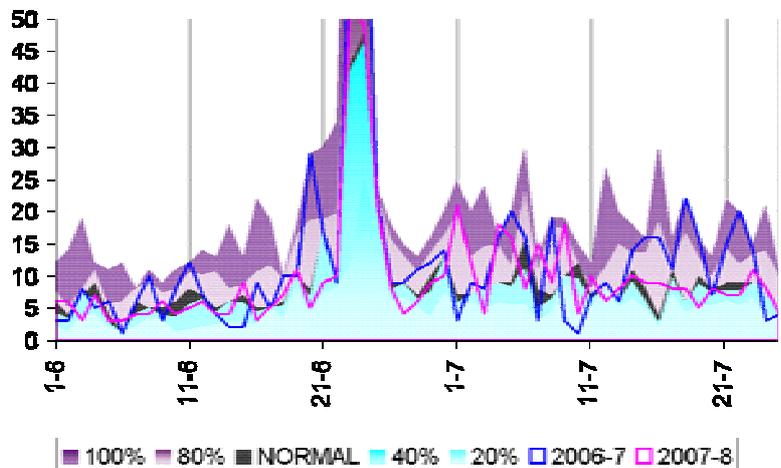
### Fire services trend (VA, VU and VF)

Last week, the activity was related with fine dead fuels of agriculture and urban areas (VA and VU). Nevertheless high moistures have restrained the number of incidents.



**Graph 1.** Total services and region services according to the type of vegetation involved, for the last fortnight from 21/07/07 to 25/07/07.

**Graphic 2.** Fire index Mbs13 (services in forest vegetation) from 01/06/07 until 25/07/07 (magenta), compared to last year Mbs13 for the same period in 2006 (blue). Trends over time of number of normal services (grey, 50% percentile), less than normal services (cyan) and maximum services (lilac) for the last 5 years.





## Important Information

### 3.1.- OUTSTANDING FIRES

#### Vilanova del Camí (25/07/2007)



- ..... Maquinària
- Línia d'aigua
- - - - MAER
- - - - Contrafoc
- - - - Crema eixamplament
- Eines manuals

- **Meteorology:**  
 There was high moisture levels during the night, but at midday the fine fuels were available.  
 During the fire humidities were around 43 - 53%, winds were from SE with gusts of 26 km/h. During the evolution of the fire, solar radiation was decreasing progressively.
  
- **Behavior:**  
 Fire was initially confined in a deep gully, until a spot fire in the harvested fields allowed the propagation of a wind driven fire on a flat area of agricultural land. The head of the fire went NW with high speed and then had continuity towards the west.

• **Operations and tactics:**  
 Fire moved through cereal crops following a NW direction. The priority for the first vehicles was the left flank. With the second arrival of vehicles the right flank was secured. Finally the head is stopped after it crossed the valley of the Garrigosa.

There were difficulties in accessing the effected area due to the difficult topography.

- **Extinction resources:**  
 13 vehicles and 9 aerial units  
**Burnt surface:** 45.6 ha



Fast fire in harvested fields.



Fire seen from the head of the west flank. In the background the town of Vilanova del Camí (Foto 1).



### 3.2.- EPISODE OF FIRE IN SOUTH – EAST EUROPE.

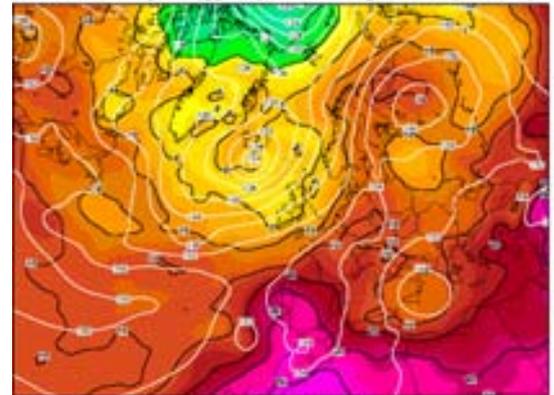
#### 3.2.1.- Warm wave in Italy and Greece 2007 compared to Portugal 2003.



Large fires have been burning in south-east Europe from June, especially in Italy and Greece. Have we experienced this before?

A study of the meteorology history in the east Mediterranean, shows us that the worst fire seasons are influenced by similar weather patterns. A common climatic condition that influences large fire episodes is warm air from the south. These situations can be described by maps of pressure, humidity, temperature, wind, etc at different heights.

InR : Set,02AUG2003 00Z ValR: Set,02AUG2003 00Z  
 850 hPa Geopot. (gpdm) und Temperatur (Grad C)



Entrada de sud a l'estiu de 2003 on es pot veure l'afectació a tot el sud-est peninsular, sent destacable Portugal on es van donar els incendis més areus

InR : Tue,24JUL2007 00Z ValR: Tue,24JUL2007 00Z  
 850 hPa Geopot. (gpdm) und Temperatur (Grad C)



Imatge meteorològica on es pot observar l'entrada d'una massa d'aire calent al territori Grec al dia 24 de juliol de 2007

From the beginning of summer, two of this Saharian warm waves have visited the East Mediterranean (Italy, Greece, Serbia, ...). The first one started on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June at the beginning of summer, and finished on 28<sup>th</sup> of the month. The second one, started the 21<sup>st</sup> of July and is still there. These saharian waves dry slowly the fuels, increasing the likelihood of fire. Temperatures have been over 40°C on several occasions during this summer, with problems of public safety. Humidities did not recover for several days,

and have been under 10% during the day in some areas between the 21 to 28<sup>th</sup>, this increased created conditions favourable for severe fires such as the one in Parc Nacional del Mont Parnitha. This burnt over 30.000 ha.

These conditions created a situation where over 300 fires were burning simultaneously

The last large Saharian wave was three years ago which effected Portugal, +South France and Catalonia. During the summer of 2003 more than 100.000 ha were burnt in Portugal, effecting 75% of the forested surface of the country . Several Saharian air masses moved over the area during June and July, the one starting on the 30th of July was a long-lasting one, staying over Portugal for 15 days .

So fires don't happen anywhere anyhow, but around the world, large episodes of forest fires are related to hot air masses movements. Greece, Italy and the rest of the east Mediterranean are now subject to one these large episodes.





Generalitat de Catalunya  
Departament d'Interior  
Relacions Institucionals i Participació  
**Direcció General de Prevenció,  
Extinció d'Incendis i Salvaments**  
Divisió Operativa  
**GRAF**

### 3.2.2.- Urban interface as a total emergency.

Wildland urban interphase and forest fires have lived together for a long time in the Mediterranean. On the 4th of July in Montroig del Camp fire (Catalonia) 5 campings and 9 bungalows were effected. Events in central and southern Italy show images of the same lack of social preparedness for similar fires.

In Italy two persons died in a circulation accident related to smoke. In total 4 deaths are related to fires, there were also over 300 people who suffered from smoke inhalation. One of the most severe fires was the one affecting central and south Italy, near Peschini. Forest fires were propagating through mature trees towards the coast. There were a number of people camping in the area and the beaches full of people, These were evacuated by boat to the safety of the sea.

These type of events demonstrate that more planning is required across Europe to protect people from the effects of fire.



Different moments of the fire affecting Peschini (24.07.07). Source: *Corriere della Sera*.

### 3.2.3.- Extinction operations in the urban interphase. Canadair CL-415.

Between professionals in the fire industry, priorities are clear: first persons, second goods, and last the forest. These are the priorities. Images from Greece and Italy show situations compromising peoples safety.

Two fatal accidents with Canadair CL-415 the 23rd and 24th of July in Greece and Italy has left 3 dead persons (2 in Evia Island, and one in Abruzzo. Our condolences to the fire world.





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Fightfighters and pilots are people as well so are the number one priority.

**This is something that we should never forget.**

Analyzing the sequence of images, we can see that in this Italian fire, the effectiveness of the aerial drops is doubtful, but safety is compromised not only for the fighters, but also for the civilians, that can be hit by an heavy drop

<http://www.ejercitodelaire.mde.es/WebEA/static/ServContenidos?id=9B1A2D1D1E3CE860C12571C50020AA26&plantilla=generica>



Sequence of a CL-415 (24.07.07). Source: *Corriere della Sera* i *La Stampa*.