



UNECE Weekly

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

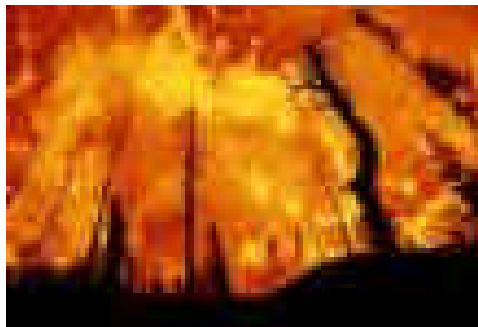
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It's just happened ...

Forest fires in the UNECE region

Forest fires in southern Europe have hit the headlines once again this summer. According to provisional data provided by the EU Member States and candidate countries and compiled by the European Commission in the frame of the collaboration of Forest Focus and the Community Action Program on Civil Protection, (data shared with UNECE), as of 15 August, there had been nearly 94,000 fires and over 350,000 ha have been burnt, of which over half non-wooded land. Over 125,000 ha have been burnt in Spain and nearly 115,000 ha in Portugal. There has also been loss of life and major international cooperation in the sharing of fire suppression resources. However, the damage is not as bad as that for 2003, when 425,000 ha burnt in Portugal.

In Russia, since the beginning of the 2005 fire season a total of 11,629 fires affected 309,545 ha forested and 90,157 ha non-forested lands of the Federal Forest Agency. (For comparison: Last year up to this date 20,441 fires burnt 391,435 ha forested and 78,479 ha non-forested lands.). These data are taken from the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) – a partner of UNECE in fire work, which maintains an up to date website with satellite images of fires under way at



<http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/>. In association with UNECE/FAO International Forest Fire News (IFFN) the GFMC has recently issued its second Global Wildland Fire Bulletin which is found on this website: http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/media/bulletin_news.htm.

A recent major UNECE/FAO study (EFSOS, the European forest sector outlook Study) drew attention to the necessity of attaching sufficient political priority to addressing issues related to wildland fire prevention and management. The underlying causes of major fires are complex, involving social factors (tension between groups, poverty, rural depopulation), silvicultural factors (accumulation of "fuel" in unmanaged forests) and climatic (droughts, extreme temperature), and the extent of damage can be controlled by efficient and rapid surveillance and suppression systems. Thus prevention strategies must also address all these factors simultaneously and not focus exclusively on one aspect. Above all, political will, expressed through stable programmes and sufficient resources are necessary to achieve lasting success. What will happen when fires are no longer on the front pages of the world's newspapers?

For more information contact Kit Prins at info.timber@unece.org.

Following the departure of Mrs Brigita Schmögnerová, Mr. Paolo Garonna, Deputy Executive Secretary, has been designated by the Secretary-General as Officer-in-Charge of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe effective 1 September, pending the appointment of a new Executive Secretary.



Coming up soon ...

5-7 September
Working Party on Noise

5-7 September
Steering Body to the Cooperative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe (EMEP)

Male and female smokers, 15 years and older in selected UNECE countries (Per cent of the total in the age group)

	1995		2000		2002	
	male	female	male	female	male	female
Armenia .....	..	..	63.7	1.2	67.5 ¹	3.1 ¹
Belarus	54.8	3.6	54.0	6.7	53.0	6.3
Bosnia and Herzegovina .....	..	..	..	..	49.2	29.7
Bulgaria	49.4	16.7	..	..	43.8 ¹	23.0 ¹
Croatia	34.1	31.6	34.1	26.6	..	..
Czech Republic	32.8	20.2	36.2	22.0	30.9	18.1
Estonia	47.5	21.7	44.1	19.9	45.0	17.9
Hungary	46.0	28.0	40.6	26.3	40.5 ²	27.8 ²
Kazakstan	60.0	7.0	..	..	46.5 ¹	7.6 ¹
Kyrgyzstan .....	..	..	60.0	12.0	51.0 ¹	4.5 ¹
Latvia	49.4	11.1	49.1	13.0	51.1	19.2
Lithuania	43.3	6.3	51.5	15.8	43.7	12.8
Poland	44.0	24.0	42.0	23.0	40.0	25.0
Republic of Moldova .....	..	..	40.0	2.0	36.4	2.0
Romania	35.6	10.5	32.3	10.1	..	..
Russian Federation .....	..	..	63.2	9.7	60.4	15.5
Slovakia .....	..	..	..	..	..	..
Slovenia	34.7	22.7	30.0	20.3	28.0 ¹	20.1 ¹
Serbia and Montenegro .....	..	..	48.0	33.6	..	..
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia .....	..	..	40.0	32.0	..	..
Tajikistan	48.5	20.5	58.0	14.0	..	..
Ukraine .....	..	..	..	..	..	..

Source: UNECE Statistical Database compiled from national and WHO sources.

Notes:

¹ data refer to 2001.

² data refer to 2003.

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