

California: the blazing west

A series of fires scattered across California have rendered the Golden State an post-apocalyptic hellscape of orange-tinted skies and snowing ash. The complex fire became the biggest recorded blaze in Californian history, after multiple fires in the state's northwest combined in high temperatures and winds to rip through 470,000 acres of dry vegetation. The heat wave that preceded this terrifying swarm was not a blip. The weeks of arid, hot air that crisped out the forests and shrubs now aflame are part of a familiar pattern of extreme weather events: the climate crisis accelerating right in our faces.

As the climate heats up, many other states in the West, including Oregon and Colorado, are seeing more devastating fires and more dangerous air quality from wildfire smoke. But California is at particular risk, both because its increasingly volatile weather may bring more droughts than other states and because it has more people and more buildings

In some parts of California the sky has blacked out to the point that drivers are using headlights to see during what would normally be broad daylight. More than half a million people fled blazes up and down the US West Coast and officials warned that the death toll is uncertain and rising. The creek Fire has burned 332 square miles of the Sierra National Forest and officials expect gusty winds to add to the difficulty in fighting the blaze. More than 212,700 acres have burned in wildfire that destroyed nearly 600 structures in Fresno and Madera counties.

To date in California more than 2.3 million acres have burned in 2020, according to Cal fire, a number that dwarfs the 118,000 acres that were scorched by this time last year.

A plume of smoke from the wildfires descended on the San Francisco Bay Area, causing the sky over the region to turn orange. "This is not a common sight because this takes very specific conditions in order for this to happen," National Weather Service(NWS) forecaster Brian Garcia told SFGate.

Climate change is real and getting worse, do we need more proof?