

Australia fires: Navy rescues people from fire-hit Mallacoota

3 January 2020



Throughout Friday, landing vessels took people to two ships - MV Sycamore and the much larger HMAS Choules. A local MP*, Darren Chester, called it an "unprecedented mass relocation of civilians". Some 4,000 residents and tourists fled* to the beach on Monday night, when racing bushfires encircled the town. The evacuees will be taken to Western Port, the navy said - around 16 hours' voyage down the coast. With roads cut off, the military evacuated around 60 people by helicopter on Thursday. The air has so far been too smoky for further air evacuations.

High temperatures and strong winds are forecast for the weekend, leading to what officials call "widespread extreme fire danger".

In other parts of Victoria, people were urged to evacuate by road in convoy. There were also large queues at railway stations.

"It is forecast* we will see dry thunderstorms coming across the state and the potential of lightning strikes," Andrew Crisp, emergency management commissioner for Victoria, warned on Friday. He called on people to leave as soon as possible. "This is your opportunity to get out," he said. "It is not just the fires we know [about]. It is the new fires that might start today."

Thousands of people are also fleeing parts of neighbouring New South Wales, where a week-long state of emergency is in force.

Since September fires have killed at least 20 people in the two states and dozens remain missing. The fires have so far destroyed more than 1,300 homes.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Scott Morrison has come under attack for his response to the fires. He was heckled* by angry locals in Cobargo, New South Wales, and had to cut short his visit to the fire-hit town. In a news conference on Friday, he said he understood people's anger and that they had "suffered a great lot" and were "feeling very raw*".

Mr Morrison has also faced criticism for his climate change policies*, with many saying urgent action must be taken.

Mr Morrison was earlier criticized for going on holiday to Hawaii as the bushfire crisis worsened*. Public anger at his absence eventually forced him to cut that trip short.

MP = Member of Parliament

flee / fled / fled : go away quickly

forecast / forecast / forecast : prévoir (météo)

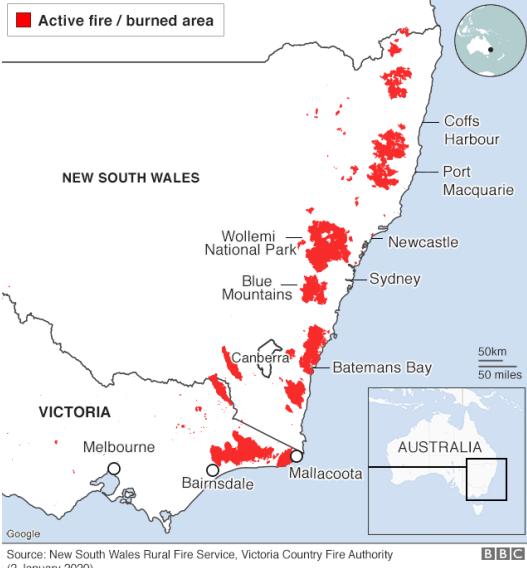
heckle : interpeler

policy : politique

raw : à vif

worsen = getting worse (worse = comparative of bad)

Bushfires in New South Wales and Victoria



<https://arstechnica.com/science/2020/01/whats-causing-australias-devastating-fire-weather/>



What's causing Australia's devastating fire weather? 1/4/2020, 6:00 PM (adapted)

An absolutely astonishing set of bushfires is burning around Australia currently, producing surreal images like those of evacuees fleeing to beaches—or boats—for safety. The situation has been particularly dangerous in Victoria and New South Wales, where fires have surrounded Sydney, choking the air with smoke. So much smoke, in fact, that even New Zealand has been significantly impacted by it over 2,000 kilometers away.

So far, almost 15 million acres* of land have burnt. For comparison, California's nightmare 2018 fire season burnt around 2 million acres.

So what has been driving these fires to such extremes? Obviously, it's the trio of hot, dry, and windy, but these conditions are occurring due to a combination of long-term trends and short-term weather patterns.

First the long-term context. Last year was both the hottest and driest on record for Australia, extending a drought*. Like the rest of the world, Australia's temperatures are climbing to ever-higher records as the climate warms*, which boosts* evaporation and strengthens* droughts in situations like this. On December 18, Australia saw the nation's hottest day on record, hitting an average* of nearly 42°C (over 107°F). That eclipsed the previous record, set just one day earlier.

A couple of factors have been responsible. Australia's climate is closely linked to the El Niño Southern Oscillation in the Pacific Ocean, which causes dry weather over Australia. There is another oscillation in the Indian Ocean called the Indian Ocean Dipole, which has been in a strongly positive phase recently. That means that waters in the western Indian Ocean have been warmer than average, with cooler temperatures to the east. This has the effect of pushing rainy weather away from Australia.

And in the last few months, an unusual pattern in the Antarctic stratosphere has helped produce clear skies in Australia as well as strong westerly winds blowing dry air seaward over Victoria and New South Wales—stoking the fires.

On Saturday, a cold front passed through southeastern Australia and reached the Sydney area in the evening. That may sound like a welcome reprieve, but it came with strong winds at the end of a very hot day—temperatures outside Sydney went as high as 48.9°C (120°F). The winds also shifted from westerly to southerly, pushing the fires in a different direction.

acre : un demi hectare

boost : augmenter

strengthen : renforcer (strong : fort)

average : moyenne

dry = adjective, drought = noun

warm : se réchauffer

BBC Website article

How did the inhabitants of Mallacoota escape the fires?

- 1-.....
- 2-.....
-

They fled to the beach where the Navy rescued them

The military evacuated them by helicopter

How did the inhabitants of other parts of Victoria escape?

- 1-.....
- 2-.....

They evacuated by road in convoy.

They took the train

Why are Australian people angry at the Prime Minister Scott Morrison?

- 1-.....
- 2-.....
-

They don't like his climate change policies

He went on holiday to Hawaii as the bushfire crisis worsened.

Arstechnica Website article

Where are the most dangerous fires situated?

.....
In New South Wales and in Victoria.

Give two facts which show the amazing importance of the fires

- 1-.....
- 2-.....
-

New Zealand has been impacted by the smoke, over 2,000 kms away

15 million acres have burned

What are the names of the two climate oscillations which caused an exceptionally dry summer in Australia?

Where are they situated?

.....
El Nino Southern Oscillation, situated in the Pacific Ocean

The Indian Ocean Dipole, situated in the Indian Ocean