

How climate change can make wildfires worse

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Ms. 26

Hot and dry

More dead wood

Longer fire season



Fire season in most places used to be about two months, now it has lengthened up to five in places, or even the full year



Higher temperatures and droughts create the ideal conditions for wildfires



Dry weather means more dead trees, shrubs and grass and more fuel for the fire

New dry plants



Plants that like humidity are replaced by more flammable plants that withstand dry conditions

Invading bugs killing trees



Warm weather leads to wood beetles from the south moving north, killing tree parts and increasing the amount of flammable material



A firefighter battles flames from the Mendocino Complex Fire in California, August 1

Thirsty trees drink more water



Water-stressed trees send down deep roots to suck up every drop of water they can, further drying out the soil

Lightning strikes



Warmer temperatures can trigger more lightning, which can set blazes

Feedback loop: Wildfires make global warming worse



Burning forests release stored carbon into the atmosphere, contributing to global warming

Blazes out of control



Climate change boosts the intensity of fires. Heightened intensity neutralises efforts to put the blaze out