



The unusually warm and dry summer so far has provoked forest fires in Europe from Greece in the south to the Arctic Circle in northern Sweden. While there have not been casualties in the forest fires in Sweden like in Greece, the fires that are raging in the country all the way up to and over the Arctic Circle, are unheard of and a stark reminder that climate change is a reality.

Traditionally 85% of the area burned in forest fires in Europe are in southern European countries such as Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain. 66 lost their lives in Portugal in forest fires last year and the number of casualties in Greece this year has risen above 50.

The current average temperature in Sweden is 5-10 degrees warmer weather and and at the same time there is little precipitation. In northern Europe, from Ireland to the Baltic states through southern Scandinavia the temperatures have risen by 3 -6°C above average and there is a 70% probability that precipitation will be lower than average. The effects of this have already been seen in Sweden where there are multiple wildfires.

During the bushfires people have been evacuated from their homes and firefighters from seven European nations, supported by 14 helicopters, have been called upon to assist its Swedish colleagues.

Some of the bushfires are being classified by the Swedish authorities to be out of control and therefore they are trying to confine it from spreading. A value of nearly \$68 million are ruined, according to the Swedish news agency TT.

While Sweden is battling some of its biggest bushfires in the country's modern history, neighbouring Norway also faces bushfires and severe drought. In May and June, more than 100 weather stations measured record-high average temperatures, with May as the hottest month in Norwegian history.

All previous temperature records were broken in many northern weather stations in May. In Norway, May 2018 was 4°C hotter than the average temperature.

The World Meteorological organization (WMO) confirmed in January, that 2015, 2016 and 2017 have been the three warmest years on record and the tendency continues.

“Arctic warmth has been especially pronounced and this will have profound and long-lasting repercussions on sea levels, and on weather patterns in other parts of the world,” said WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas.

According to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), episodes of precipitation and extreme heat are increasing as a result of climate change. Although the individual episodes of extreme weather events this summer cannot be attributed to climate change, they are compatible with the general long-term trend.

The record high temperatures in the High North this summer follow record breaking temperatures last year. For instance average temperatures in Svalbard were in 2017 up to 4,5

degrees higher than normal according to an interview with Reidun Gangstø Skaland from the Norwegian Meteorological Institute in the Barents Observes.

A reminder that we are witnessing climate change rather than global warming, is that while fires rage and heat records are broken in most of continental Europe from Kiruna to Crete, Iceland has experienced an unusually cold summer, with the average temperature in the capital Reykjavik only 8,7 degrees, the lowest in more than two decades.

According Sustainable Development Goal 13 “Climate Action”: climate change is now affecting every country on every continent. It is disrupting national economies and affecting lives, costing people, communities and countries dearly today and even tomorrow. Read more about the Sustainable Development Goals, action and progress here.

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/climate-change-2/>

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

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The hot summer in Europe: Even the Arctic is burning

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