

North American Seasonal Fire Assessment and Outlook

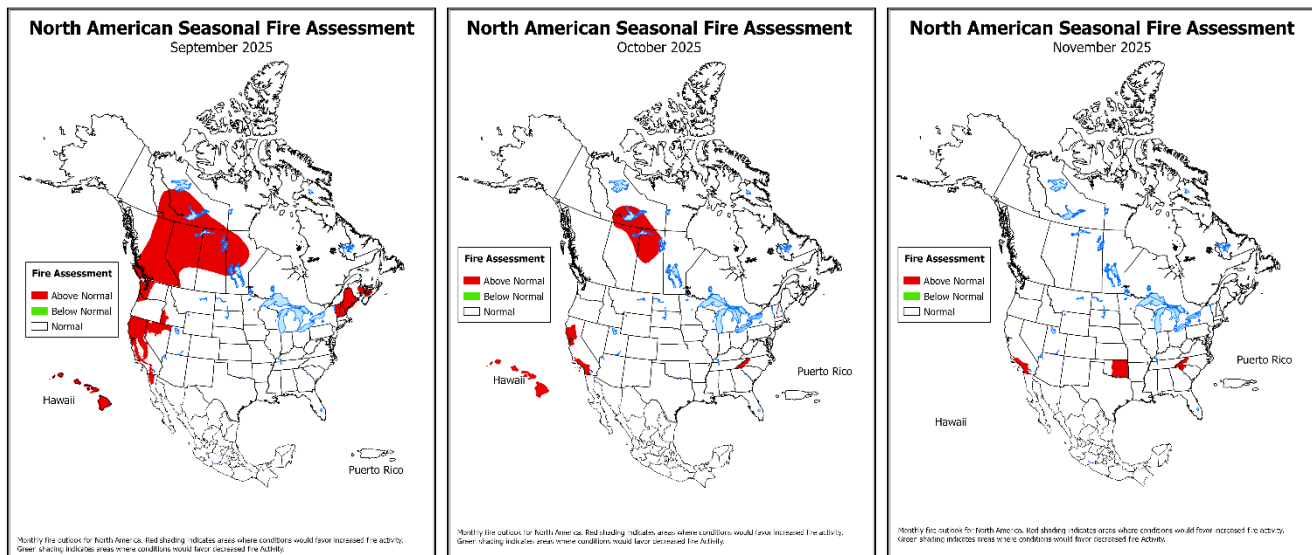
National Interagency Fire Center • Natural Resources Canada • Servicio Meteorológico Nacional
United States Canada Mexico

Outlook Period September 2025 through November 2025

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Executive Summary

Driven by periods of ridging, much of Canada had a warmer than normal August. The strongest temperature anomalies were over the southern interior of British Columbia and the southern parts of the Yukon and Northwest Territories. Out west, the first half of the month neutral to weak La Niña conditions (cooler than normal equatorial Pacific waters) have resulted in a Pacific weather pattern closely resembling a typical La Niña pattern. Several transient waves moved from the Pacific Coast into central Canada. Here, there were periods of warm, dry conditions followed by significant troughs and rain events. Eastern Canada has been different. The placement of the Polar Vortex over Hudson Bay has preferentially steered weather systems to the north (through Ontario, Quebec, and Labrador) and south (off the Atlantic coast) of Atlantic Canada. This precipitation deficit contributed to an extremely challenging month for fire crews in Atlantic Canada. Several large fires burned on the landscape with intensities rarely seen in this region. Late in August, a high amplitude ridge moved in from the Pacific coast, bringing prolonged hot and dry conditions. Temperatures above 30 C were observed across British Columbia, the southern Northwest Territories, much of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. This period of warm and dry conditions contributed to intensifying late season fires, notably in southern British Columbia, near Great Slave Lake in the Northwest Territories, and west central Saskatchewan.



Monthly fire outlook for North America for September 2025 (left), October 2025 (middle), and November 2025 (right). Red shading indicates areas where conditions would favor increased fire activity. Green shading indicates areas where conditions would favor decreased fire activity. *Click on each image to see larger versions.*

August had several days with extreme heat. Quebec and part of Atlantic Canada were impacted by an intense heatwave from August 9-13. Notably New Carlisle reached 35.5 C and Maple Plains, Prince Edward Island hit 38.1C, the highest temperature ever recorded in the province. Other regions had five consecutive days above 30 C. Outside of this period, Atlantic Canada was slightly cooler than normal, resulting in average monthly temperatures. At the same time, Cornwall in Ontario hit 36 C. Additionally, on August 13, Kamloops, British Columbia topped 38 C. Lytton, British Columbia topped 40C for four consecutive days from August 25-28, and nearby Lillooet also topped 40 C on August 27.

Ashcroft/Cache Creek also reached 40.8 C on September 3, marking a new record maximum temperature. Many other record highs were recorded in late August and early September.

Near record lows for August precipitation were recorded over much of Atlantic Canada, coastal Quebec, and southeast Ontario. Eastern New Brunswick and northern Nova Scotia have been exceptionally dry, with some regions below the 2nd percentile of monthly precipitation. Outside of these exceptionally dry regions, from Montreal to Newfoundland all areas are below the 40th percentile of precipitation totals. Areas in Estrie and Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean in Quebec received less than 20 mm of rain through the first 21 days of August. The Greenwood region in Nova Scotia received only 11.8 mm of rain throughout the month, and the Daniel's Harbor area in Newfoundland received only 24.2 mm of rain, its driest August on record. Late in the month there were two significant rainfall events with approximately 65 mm of rain falling over the Laurentians, providing a break to the dry conditions in this area. Bancroft, Ontario received only 25% of its monthly rainfall, and many other parts of the province had below normal rainfall. Windsor and Thunder Bay were also notable, receiving only 36% and 39% of their normal rainfall respectively. Newfoundland itself was impacted by some additional moisture and sits closer to normal, though there are a few areas in the north which missed much of the rain.

The precipitation deficit was also notable in British Columbia. The southern interior and east central part of the province received less than 40% of their normal August amounts. These values would likely be less in the south if not for a significant rainfall event in the middle of the month which brought upward of 80 mm of rain to the south coast.

The most persistent rain fell over east central to northeast Alberta, extending into all of Saskatchewan, and western Manitoba. Here, as much as 200% of the normal August rainfall has been measured in southwest Saskatchewan, and broad areas in the 115-150% of normal rainfall have been recorded over an area extending from southern Alberta through to the Regina region in Saskatchewan.

Fire activity in the US increased in early August before moderating late in the month but increased again in early September. August precipitation was below normal across most of the Southeast and Four Corners, South Texas, and from the Mid-Mississippi Valley to the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic. However, precipitation was above normal in the Sierra, southeast Oregon, northern and western Great Basin, and portions of western and northern Washington. Smaller areas of above normal precipitation were observed in the Southeast and Plains. Overall, drought increased slightly across the US in August, with a third of the country now in drought. For early September precipitation has been mostly below normal in the West, Plains, Midwest, and Gulf Coast, with smaller above normal areas in northern California, Oregon, Kansas, Upper Michigan, and Tennessee Valley. Temperatures have been above normal in the West, focused on the Northwest, and below normal from the Plains to the East Coast, focused on the Midwest.

Climate Prediction Center and Predictive Services outlooks issued in late August indicate above normal temperatures are likely across much of the US through November focused on the latter half of the period. Wetter than normal conditions are likely portions of the Northwest, northern and central Plains, and Southeast in September, with above normal precipitation likely to persist into the winter in the Northwest. Below normal precipitation is forecast for the fall and early winter in the Southwest to the southern Plains and Tennessee Valley. Above normal significant fire potential is forecast for September for portions of the West Coast into northern Nevada, and southwest Idaho, with above normal potential for northern New England, as well. Most of these areas will return to normal potential in October, but portions of central and southern California will remain above normal. Above normal potential is forecast for the North Carolina mountains in October, expanding into the South Carolina mountains in November. The southern California mountains and coast will remain above normal for November, with above normal potential forecast for eastern Oklahoma in November. For Hawai'i, above normal significant fire potential is forecast for the lee sides for through October, returning to normal for November.

While Mexico's wildfire season is winding down, Baja California continues to face an above average wildfire risk in September, despite the season officially ending this month.

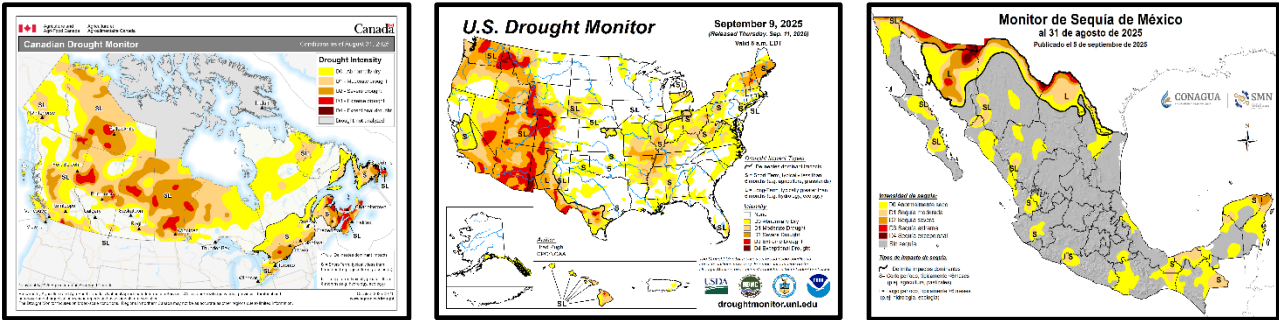
Recent weather patterns have had mixed effects on drought conditions across Mexico. Average temperatures remained above normal between May and July. Precipitation was below average in July and August but exceeded normal levels in June. These mixed conditions led to a nationwide decrease in drought, except for some areas in Oaxaca, Chiapas, and the Yucatán Peninsula, where moderate drought conditions have developed. Based on Mexico's current and forecast climatological analyses, a warm and dry outlook is anticipated for the August-October quarter.

Critical Factors

The critical factors influencing significant fire potential for this outlook period are global climate patterns related to sea surface temperatures, particularly in the Pacific Ocean, and large scale, longer-term soil moisture deficits:

El Niño-Southern Oscillation and Other Climatic Teleconnections:

El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) neutral conditions persist in the equatorial Pacific Ocean with sea surface temperatures near to slightly below average. The Climate Prediction Center is forecasting ENSO neutral conditions to continue into the early fall, with a likely transition to La Niña later in the fall, with a nearly 60% chance of occurrence. However, there is still a 40% chance that ENSO neutral conditions will continue into the winter. The negative phase of the Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO) persists but has begun to weaken recently. It also remains a factor for this outlook. The Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO) has weakened since early August and is forecast to remain weak, not factoring into this outlook. The ENSO neutral conditions with the potential shift to La Niña will continue to be the main driver of this outlook, coupled with the negative PDO.



Left: [Canadian Drought Monitor](#) from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. **Middle:** [United States Drought Monitor](#). **Right:** [Mexican Drought Monitor](#) from CONAGUA-Servicio Meteorológico Nacional.

Drought:

As of September, 71% of Canada is characterized as abnormally dry or in moderate to extreme drought. This includes 70% of Canada's growing region. Drought conditions continued to deteriorate in much of Canada. Only small areas of the country, extending from southern Alberta into south-central Saskatchewan, as well as small parts of British Columbia, saw drought recovery. The most significant drying took place in Atlantic Canada.

Pockets of extreme drought can be found across the country. In Atlantic Canada due to a nearly 65 mm (<40% of normal) precipitation deficit for the month, a large area of extreme drought is now present. Extreme drought is present in much of northern Nova Scotia, eastern New Brunswick, nearly all of Prince Edward Island, and southeast Newfoundland. The drying trend extended into southern Ontario and Quebec, where areas of severe drought and extreme drought are now present. Several other extreme drought pockets are also present across the Prairies, with the Peace region in northwestern Alberta and the Great Slave Lake region having the most significant dry areas.

The resulting drought conditions have had a major impact on the Canadian Forest Fire Danger Rating System's Drought Code. The provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward have near record values, and well above the 90th percentile for the Drought Code. Similarly high percentiles could

be found in the southern Interior of British Columbia, and well as near Great Slave Lake in the Northwest Territories. Extreme absolute values for the Drought Code sit in southern British Columbia, as is often the case for late summer, and the northwestern prairies are following closely behind.

Overall drought increased across the US since early August with nearly 36% of the US in drought as of September 9. Drought persisted in much of the western US, although slight improvement in drought was observed in portions of the Greater Four Corners. Drought also improved in much of Florida, the northern Plains, and southeast Oregon. However, drought has developed in much of the Lower and Mid-Mississippi Valley north and east through the Ohio Valley into northern New England, and drought persists in central Michigan. Extreme drought persists in portions of the southwestern US, Rockies, and northern Cascades, and covers portions of every western US state. Extreme drought is also occurring in small portions of southwest Texas and western New Hampshire. Small areas of exceptional drought persist in southwest New Mexico, South Texas, and the Idaho Panhandle. Drought is expected to persist in most areas, but improve in New England and the Northwest, while expanding into the central and southern High Plains, into more of the Ohio Valley, and portions of the Mid-Atlantic.

During the first half of August, above average precipitation was recorded in specific areas of northwestern, west-central, and southeastern Mexico, as well as the Yucatán Peninsula. This rain was caused by seven tropical waves that crossed the country, the Mexican Monsoon, Tropical Storm Ivo, and several areas of low-pressure. These weather systems helped reduce areas with severe to exceptional drought in the northwest and decreased areas with moderate drought in the Yucatán Peninsula.

Despite the recent rain, some regions still face challenges. Rainfall deficits were observed in several parts of Mexico, causing drought areas to persist in the northwest and north. Additionally, areas with abnormally dry conditions and moderate drought slightly expanded in the northeast, west, southern Pacific, and southeastern regions.

Fire Season Status:

As of September 8, Canada has recorded approximately 5,100 fires this year, and just over 600 are actively burning. To date, roughly 8.8 million hectares have burned, making 2025 the second largest area burned on record after 2023. During August, fires burned periodically from coast to coast, with much of the attention being placed on Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. The number of fires to date remains close to average, indicating that there have been many large fires.

Saskatchewan and Manitoba represent the largest deviations from normal in terms of areas burned. In 2025 so far, Saskatchewan has burned more than six times the twenty-five-year average and Manitoba has burned more than eleven times its average area. Nova Scotia and New Brunswick typically only have small areas burned but have had approximately 8,500 hectares and 2,500 hectares burned respectively. Newfoundland and Labrador sit just below their twenty-five-year average due to a primarily quiet season in Labrador. Newfoundland itself has had an above average fire season as many of this season's fires have burned in populated areas and have resulted in numerous evacuations and structure losses. Fire behavior on Canada's East Coast has been significant due to the periods of extreme heat and underlying drought conditions. This has resulted in fires that have been difficult to contain, a feature not normal in this part of the country.

During the first half of August, fire activity diminished somewhat over Canada's Prairie provinces due to a series of rain events that helped to get active fires under control and minimize new ignitions. However, a heat event near the end of the month allowed enough drying for fires in central and northern Saskatchewan to increase in activity. This heat event extended into southern parts of the Northwest Territories. The underlying drought conditions in these regions have allowed several fires to burn with significant intensity and smoke output. These fires have prompted several evacuations to the Whiti and Fort Providence regions.

Much of the summer had been relatively quiet across British Columbia until the previously mentioned heat event. In the final days of August, a significant lightning event ignited several wildfires in southern and western parts of the province. Fires such as the Caribou Complex have generated significant smoke output. Other fires in the south have resulted in numerous highway closures, notably along the Coquihalla highway.

In the US, fire activity increased across the US during the first three weeks of August, with the Rocky Mountain, Southwest, and Great Basin Geographic Areas having the most activity. The Northern Rockies also increased mid-month. Activity decreased in most areas at the end of the month, although California observed a modest increase in activity during this time. A more substantial increase in activity was observed in early September in California and the Northwest due to two impactful dry lightning events. The National Preparedness Level increased to four (on a scale of 1-5) August 5 due to large fires in several geographic areas but was decreased to three August 30 due to the brief moderation in activity, followed by another increase to four September 4. Through September 12, 1,768,168 hectares (4,369,143 acres) have burned across the US, at 73% of the 10-year average. However, the 48,592 fires recorded thus far is above average, at 112%.

Between January and August, Mexico experienced a significant wildfire season, with a total of 6,750 wildfires recorded across all 32 states. These wildfires affected over 1.14 million hectares. The majority of the burned area, or 95%, consisted of grass and brush, with the remaining 5% impacting timber. The states with the highest number of wildfires were Jalisco, State of Mexico, Michoacán, Chihuahua, Mexico City, Durango, Puebla, Guerrero, Chiapas, and Oaxaca. Together, these states accounted for about 74% of the national total. The states with the largest burned areas were Chihuahua, Durango, Guerrero, Sinaloa, Jalisco, Tabasco, Nayarit, Baja California, Sonora, and Michoacán. Collectively, they represented 77% of the total burned area nationwide.

Mexico's highest wildfire activity in terms of frequency was concentrated in the northern, central, and western regions of the country. For the extent of burned area, the northern, northwestern, and Pacific states were the most severely impacted. A significant portion of the wildfires, 1,369 incidents (about 20%), occurred in fire-sensitive ecosystems. These incidents burned 165,872 hectares, which is equivalent to 15% of the total affected area.

Canada Discussion

September/October/November: Forecasts are in general agreement for warmer than normal temperatures across the country. The highest anomalies and confidence are over northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The British Columbia coast and most of the Yukon have the smallest temperature anomalies and are likely to have near normal temperatures. Elsewhere positive temperature anomalies indicate brief periods of warmth followed by near-normal conditions. There is less consensus across seasonal forecasts for September precipitation. Model agreement is highest on the coast of British Columbia extending into the Yukon, where above-normal precipitation is forecast. The moist signal extends into central parts of the Northwest Territories and western Nunavut, though confidence is lower. Forecasts in this region will be determined by the number and intensity of low-pressure systems that initiate to the lee of the Mackenzie Mountains. Variable precipitation is anticipated across the central part of the country. Forecast consensus is leaning slightly towards moist conditions for the eastern Prairies and northwestern Ontario. Atlantic Canada is once again forecast to have a drier than normal month. Anomalies vary widely in this region, though Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island are anticipated to be the driest, with Newfoundland receiving closer to normal precipitation. This has been the story for the later half of summer with many of the larger weather systems deviating to the north and south of this region. The caveat for this region is the Atlantic Hurricane season. If any of these storms remain intact and impact the coast, the associated precipitation will help to put an end to a challenging fire season.

Given these conditions, Canada's active fire season will continue into much of September. A wetter than normal month for the British Columbia coast and potentially central Northwest Territories should

help to end the active fire season in these regions. A variable forecast for the central prairies and Atlantic Canada will keep fire danger elevated there.

October has a temperature forecast similar to September. The greatest temperature anomalies sit over central Canada, while the West Coast is likely to have near normal temperatures. Model confidence for a warmer than normal October is higher on the Atlantic Coast than last month, though anomalies remain small. Above normal precipitation is once again forecast for most of British Columbia. This month however, the moist signal tracks into central British Columbia and Alberta. This leaves Yukon and central parts of the Northwest Territories with near normal precipitation. The anomaly maps for October indicate significant frontal activity impacting the coast, as well as low-pressure systems tracking across 60° N latitude, from Alberta towards Hudson Bay. The central Prairies are more likely to have near normal precipitation, though a drier signal is present just south of the American border. Ontario and Quebec are forecast to have near-to-above normal precipitation. Atlantic Canada is once again predicted to be drier than normal. Confidence in this signal remains highest over New Brunswick while closer to normal precipitation is possible in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland.

While Atlantic Canada remains drier than normal, autumn precipitation is likely to be sufficient to put an end to the fire season in October. Similar scenarios are likely for British Columbia and southern parts of the Northwest Territories. However, some large fires in the Northwest Territories may continue to burn and smolder well into October. Confidence in continued burning and smoldering is higher in northern and central Saskatchewan due to deep organic layers and periods of warmer and dry conditions.

November once again looks warmer than average, and the signal is strongest over the eastern half of Canada but a bit weaker over the west. Forecast uncertainty is highest over British Columbia and the Yukon. Forecasts point toward a wet November in British Columbia, the southern Territories, and northern Quebec. A drier than normal forecast remains for Atlantic Canada. A broad dry signal south of the border provides a high degree of uncertainty for the near normal conditions predicted for much of central and eastern Canada.

Canada's significant fire potential forecast for September is similar to the August outlook, with above normal potential persisting across a broad area that includes parts of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Yukon, and Northwest Territories, plus portions of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Most of these areas will revert to normal potential for October. However, above normal potential is expected to continue in October for a smaller area spanning parts of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Northwest Territories. Normal significant fire potential is expected across all of Canada for November.

United States Discussion

September/October/November: ENSO neutral conditions are occurring in the equatorial Pacific Ocean and are expected to continue into early fall before likely transitioning to La Niña later in the fall. Model, Climate Prediction Center, and Predictive Services forecasts for the next three months indicate above normal temperatures are likely across much of the US, especially in the southwestern and northeast US. Precipitation is likely to be near normal for most of the US in September, with portions of the Northwest and Southeast favored to have above normal precipitation this fall. Below normal precipitation is likely this fall for the southwestern US into the southern Plains and Lower Mississippi Valley.

Above normal significant fire potential is forecast for September for western Washington and northwest Oregon, northern California, the mountains of central and southern California, northern Nevada, southwest Idaho, and northern New England. Most of these areas will return to normal potential in October, but above normal potential will persist in October for parts of California, from the Sacramento Valley west to the coast in northern California and in the southern California mountains, expanding to the southern California coast. Above normal potential is forecast for the North Carolina mountains in October, which will expand into the South Carolina mountains in November. Eastern Oklahoma is also

forecast to have above normal potential for November. Out West, the southern California mountains and coast will remain above normal for November while northern California returns to normal. For Hawai'i, above normal significant fire potential is forecast for the lee sides for September and October, returning to normal for November.

Mexico Discussion

September/October/November: Above-average rainfall is forecast for Aguascalientes, Campeche, Chiapas, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Michoacán, Oaxaca, Quintana Roo, Tabasco, Veracruz and Yucatán in September. The rest of the country is expected to receive below-average precipitation. Above average temperatures are projected for most of the country. However, below average temperatures may occur in parts of the Baja California Peninsula, Sonora, Chihuahua, Durango, Nayarit and Jalisco in September.

For October, above average rainfall is forecast for Tlaxcala. In contrast, below-average precipitation is expected in the rest of the country. Above average temperatures are projected across most of the country. However, some areas may experience below average temperatures, including parts of Sonora, Chihuahua, Durango, Nayarit, and Jalisco.

Below average rainfall is forecast for all of Mexico in November. Above average temperatures are projected across most of the country. However, some areas may experience below average temperatures, including parts of the Baja California Peninsula, Sonora, Chihuahua, Nayarit, and Jalisco.

Considering the current temperature and precipitation patterns, the national drought situation, and the climatological outlook, wildfire activity across most of Mexico is expected to remain minimal through November, which is typical of the seasonal decline in wildfire occurrence. However, an exception is Baja California, where fire activity and potential is projected to remain above normal in September despite the official end of its fire season this month.

Additional Information

Additional and supplemental information for this outlook can be obtained at:

United States:

National Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook

https://www.nifc.gov/nicc-files/predictive/outlooks/monthly_seasonal_outlook.pdf

Canada:

Canadian Wildland Fire Information System

<http://cwfis.cfs.nrcan.gc.ca/home>

Mexico:

Servicio Meteorológico Nacional

<https://smn.conagua.gob.mx/es/observando-el-tiempo/monitoreo-atmosferico-ambiental>

Outlook Objective

The North American Seasonal Fire Assessment and Outlook is a general discussion of conditions that will affect the occurrence of wildland fires across Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Wildland fire is a natural part of many ecosystems across North America. This document provides a broad assessment of those factors that will contribute to an increase or decrease of seasonal fire activity. The objective is to assist wildland fire managers prepare for the potential variations in a typical fire season. It is not intended as a prediction of where and when wildland fires will occur nor is it intended to suggest any area is safe from the hazards of wildfire.

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