

Sydney Bushfires

Firefighters in the Australian state of New South Wales are battling what is being called the worst fire ever seen in the region. Eight different bushfires have combined north of the city of Sydney to form what people have dubbed a "mega-fire". The gigantic blaze is just an hour's drive from Sydney. Tens of thousands of homes, businesses and other properties are in its path. The giant inferno is burning across a swath of land covering over 300,000 hectares. The front of the mega-fire is roughly 60km wide. Authorities say it is burning out of control and is too vast to contain. Fire Service Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers said: "We cannot stop these fires. They will just keep burning until conditions ease."

The ease with which over 100 separate fires are spreading across the state has been exacerbated by a prolonged drought. This is concerning authorities who say it is very early in the season for the ground to be so dry. A spokesman said: "There's a tough couple of months ahead and we've already seen the horrific consequences of fire so far this season." People in Sydney are suffering from hazardous and toxic smoke from the fire. The city is shrouded in the choking smoke. Residents have received advisories about exercising outside. Locals say it is the "worst ever" fire and is "unprecedented". An official said: "People's emotions are very, very tested and frail at the moment."

Paragraph 1

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| 1. battling | a. Joined together; united; merged. |
| 2. combined | b. Of very great size or extent; huge or enormous. |
| 3. dubbed | c. A lengthy and difficult conflict or struggle. |
| 4. gigantic | d. A broad strip or area of something. |
| 5. blaze | e. A very large or fiercely burning fire. |
| 6. swath | f. Absence of difficulty or effort. |
| 7. ease | g. Gave an unofficial name or nickname to someone or something. |

Paragraph 2

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| 8. exacerbated | h. Weak and delicate. |
| 9. prolonged | i. Results or effects of an action or condition. |
| 10. drought | j. Risky; dangerous. |
| 11. consequences | k. Made a problem, bad situation, or negative feeling worse. |
| 12. hazardous | l. Continuing for a long time or longer than usual; lengthy. |
| 13. toxic | m. Poisonous. |
| 14. frail | n. A prolonged period of abnormally low rainfall, leading to a shortage of water. |