

# Los Angeles is on Fire

January 12, 2025

The fires in California are still under investigation. Officials have said that they were not caused by lightning, which is the most common cause of wildfires in the U.S. There is also no evidence so far that arson or power lines—two other leading causes—started these fires. Detectives are continuing to examine all possible causes.

Experts believe climate change is playing a major role in making wildfires more frequent and severe. California has gone through extreme weather swings, with some years being very wet and others extremely dry. During wet years, plants and vegetation grow rapidly. However, when the weather turns dry, this vegetation dies and becomes fuel for fires. This year, dry weather and strong winds have created conditions that make it easy for wildfires to ignite and spread.



The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration points to climate change as a key reason wildfires are getting worse. Higher temperatures, drier air, and extended dry periods are all linked to a warming climate. These changes have made California more vulnerable to fires, and the state's governor has said that wildfires are now a year-round issue, no longer limited to fire season.

In downtown Los Angeles, only 0.16 inches of rain have fallen since October, leaving the land very dry. Weather experts say there is no rain expected in the near future, and the strong winds, which are expected to pick up again soon, could make the situation even more dangerous. Without rain or calmer winds, firefighters will face significant challenges in containing the fires.

## Comprehension Questions:

- Which of these statements is NOT true?
  - California has experienced extreme weather changes.
  - Dry weather and strong winds make fires spread faster.
  - Lightning caused the recent fires in California.
  - Wildfires are no longer limited to a specific season in California.
- Why are detectives investigating the fires?
  - To find out how the fires started.
  - To learn how to prevent future lightning strikes.
  - To see if firefighters are working effectively.
  - To examine the impact of rain on the fires.
- How has climate change contributed to wildfires?
  - By causing more arson cases.
  - By increasing temperatures and making the air drier.
  - By reducing the amount of vegetation in California.
  - By making lightning storms more frequent.

4. What is one reason plants become fuel for fires?
- They grow too slowly during dry years.
  - They dry out and die after wet years.
  - They absorb too much water during wet years.
  - They are destroyed by strong winds during dry years.
5. What is likely to happen if the strong winds continue?
- The fires will be harder to control.
  - The strong winds will stop the fires.
  - Detectives will stop investigating the fires.
  - Vegetation will grow back quickly.
6. What does the governor mean by saying wildfires are a "year-round issue"?
- Fires only happen during the summer months.
  - Wildfires have become easier to control.
  - California no longer has dry weather.
  - Fires can now occur at any time of the year.
7. What is the connection between wet years and wildfires?
- Wet years prevent fires from happening.
  - Wet years help plants grow, which later become fuel during dry years.
  - Wet years lead to fewer strong winds.
  - Wet years increase the chances of arson.
8. What role does wind play in the spread of wildfires?
- It dries out the vegetation.
  - It brings rain to affected areas.
  - It causes plants to grow faster.
  - It helps fires spread more quickly.
9. What conclusion can you make about California's climate?
- It has always been very dry and windy.
  - It has become more extreme, with wet and dry cycles.
  - It is not affected by climate change.
  - It is mostly rainy year-round.
10. What is the main idea of the article?
- Wildfires are common in California due to lightning.
  - Climate change is worsening wildfires in California.
  - Firefighters are struggling because of lack of training.
  - Arson is the primary cause of wildfires in California.

**Speaking and Writing Activities:**

- Discuss these questions with a partner or a small group.
- Choose one topic and write a response to it. Show your writing to a classmate or teacher.

1. What do you think people can do to help prevent wildfires?
2. Do you think climate change is affecting your home country? How?
3. If a wildfire was near your home and you had to leave quickly, what three things would you take with you?