



Wildfires Advisory

August and September are the worst months for wildfires globally. They have already caused mass devastation this year, destroying homes, livelihoods, ecosystems and millions of hectares of land.

Media teams covering wildfires face multiple risks. We have summarised some key safety considerations from the RiskPal platform.

- Never underestimate the speed, power and destructive nature of a wildfire. Maintain **constant situational awareness**; even small fires can rapidly spread due to dry conditions, high temperatures and prevailing winds.
- Note that fires typically progress in the direction of the ambient wind, so always pay attention to **wind direction** and reposition accordingly. Fires can change direction in seconds and new fires can start as ashes, cinders and other debris circulates.
- The level of training, standard of equipment and **experience of the fire authorities will vary** depending upon the location. If working alongside the fire authorities, pay attention to their instructions and avoid distracting them from doing their job.
- Observe all cordons, and never position yourself ahead of any fire personnel. **Never obstruct emergency vehicles** or civilian escape routes with your vehicle(s).
- Avoid positioning yourself on terrain above a fire as **fire typically travels uphill at a fast pace** due to the rising heat and smoke preheating the land higher up.
- Regularly stop to drink water and stay **hydrated**.
- Never position yourself between two burning fronts, and constantly **identify multiple exit routes**. Identify key landmarks that can help orientate yourself if you become lost.
- Be prepared to retreat at any point in case the situation deteriorates. **Stay together** as a team. Working alone at the scene of a wildfire is not advised.
- Keep a safe distance from gas supplies, electrical posts and cables, **combustible materials**, batteries, and/or fuel and oil storage containers.
- **Visibility will likely be reduced** due to the smoke/haze created by fires. Exercise caution when walking and pay attention to hazards on the ground ahead of you, especially if you are wearing a full face respirator.
- You should not put wet clothing (e.g. a scarf or bandana) over your mouth and/or nose - **moist air can harm your airway** more than dry air at the same temperature.

EXTRAS

- Access to the scene of a wildfire may be tightly controlled by the relevant fire authorities. In some countries, the authorities may insist upon advance fire safety training before allowing media personnel to report from an affected location.
- Check that your insurance policy covers you to work at a wildfire location, with an appropriate level of medical and emergency cover.
- Consider and discuss the risk of PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder). Media workers may witness distressing scenes as people's properties are destroyed and animals killed. Such scenes of complete destruction can be distressing.
- Local people affected by wildfires will likely be upset and/or angry. Always seek permission before filming or photographing them and their property.