

Workshop on wildfire management highlights areas for improvement

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The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine held a workshop on long-term approaches for wildfire management on March 27.

The workshop looked at the costs of wildfires, not only in terms of the financial costs of fire suppression and rehabilitation of property and ecosystems, but also in terms of the loss of lives, effects on physical health and local economies, and impacts of cascading events, such as landslides and flooding.

One of the strategies discussed in the workshop involved the creation of a national fire hazard zone map, similar to FEMA's flood zone maps, to assist with regional planning and establishing adequate insurance policies for at-risk areas.

These maps could be created and utilized by the Forest Service in conducting activities such as controlled burns. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection already publishes similar maps for moderate, high, and very high risk zones using weather, fuels, and historical trends. The maps are used in local planning to ensure new structures are more fire-resistant.

The workshop also focused on expanding the current understanding of forest fires to recognize their potential damage and the role of the urban-wildland interface, among other factors, in their development. Workshop participants said there is still much more research to be done before we can fully comprehend these events.

Source: National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine
