Wildfires

Wildfires are causing more frequent and wider-ranging societal impacts, especially as residential communities continue to expand into wildland areas. Since 2000, there have been twelve wildfires in the United States that have each caused damages exceeding $1 billion; cumulatively, these twelve wildfires have caused a total of $44 billion in damages.

Basics
Wildfires are unplanned fires that burn in natural areas, such as grasslands, shrublands, forests, or other environments, including wildland areas where people live. They can start from both human and natural causes, such as lightning, and they affect every state in the U.S. Nearly 85 percent of U.S. wildfires are from human causes, including uncontrolled campfires, burning debris, sparks from malfunctioning equipment, discarded cigarettes, and arson, accounting for 44% of the total area burned across the U.S.

Frequently Asked Questions

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Water Quality
Water quality refers to whether water is suitable for a certain purpose, like drinking or irrigation. Both natural and man-made factors can affect water quality. Contaminants can include bacteria, metals, and man-made chemicals like pesticides or pharmaceutical drugs.

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Weather hazards impact the entire country, with enormous effects on the economy and public safety. Since 1980, weather/climate disasters have cost the U.S. economy more than $1.5 trillion. In an average year, the United States will be affected by six billion-dollar weather/climate disasters, but this number has increased in recent years: from 2013-2017 the average was 11.6 events.

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