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Information Bulletin

Portugal and Spain: Forest fires

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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Date of disaster: Portugal – 17 June 2017 Spain – 24 June 2017	Points of contact: Portugal: Diana Araújo – Cooperation Responsible at International Department, Portuguese Red Cross Phone: +351919569031 E-mail: cooperacao@cruzvermelha.org.pt Spain: Iñigo Vila – Head of Disaster Management Unit, Spanish Red Cross Phone: +34 913352059 E-mail: vila@cruzroja.es
Host National Society: Portuguese Red Cross (PRC) with 326 staff and volunteers actively involved in responding to the fires / Spanish Red Cross (SRC) with 25 volunteers actively involved in responding to the fires	
Other partner organizations involved in the operation: Portugal: local authorities including civil protection, armed forces, firefighters, INEM / Spain: UME (emergency military units), local authorities	

This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is not seeking funding or other international assistance from donors for this operation.

The situation

Spain

Forest fires broke out **in the night of Saturday, 24 June** near the town of Moguer in the coastal area of **Huelva province** in southwest Spain. Joint military-civilian forces were immediately deployed with more than 550 firefighters, 11 water-dropping planes, 10 helicopters and 57 fire extinction vehicles. The blaze also reached the limits of the famous UNESCO World Heritage Site, Doñana National Park, which has unique biodiversity and is home to many endangered species. More than **1,500 people** were **forced to leave their homes** as well as hotels and campsites as the flames were quickly advancing in various directions. Some 750 people fleeing or evacuated were sheltered in temporary rescue centres and sports centres in the municipalities of Matalascañas and Moguer and village of El Roció. Some have since been allowed to return to their homes. No casualties occurred to date. The fire has been confirmed to have been caused by human factor (likely arson) with investigations into the exact cause yet ongoing.

While the blaze is by now **under full control**, the hot, dry water – with temperatures close to 40 °C – and shifting winds may easily reignite the fires. Several areas across the country have been put on high alert and fire risk due to the continued heatwave.

Portugal

The **forest fires** that have been raging across **Leiria and Coimbra districts** in central Portugal **since 17 June** are now also **fully under control** thanks to slightly decreasing temperatures, higher humidity and shifting winds from past Wednesday (19 June) onwards. Portugal's worst wildfire has claimed **64 lives, injured 204** and **displaced some 500 people**. Officials and emergency forces remain on alert due to the continued hot and dry weather which may potentially reactivate some of the fire spots.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Spain

The **Spanish Red Cross (SRC)** has immediately responded upon the outbreak of the fires through the deployment of its **emergency response unit (ERIES in Spanish)** with **25 volunteers**. The unit is currently providing **psychosocial support, temporary shelter, meals, hygiene and baby kits** to those evacuated. It has also activated its stand-by cooperation agreement with the **Carrefour Foundation** which has rapidly made available from its Huelva shop 400 bottles of mineral **water**, 400 bottles of **fruit juices**, 200 **blankets**, 100 pieces of **toilet paper** and 200 pieces of **dental kits** sufficient for **350 people**.

The SRC has also one ambulance and two tango cars/trucks (one for cargo, one for personal transport) on the spot as well as a ten-strong team including two team leaders, drivers and lifeguards.



Quick mobilization of the emergency assistance provided by the Carrefour Foundation as a strong example of civil and corporate partnership in times of disasters. *Source: Spanish Red Cross*

Portugal

With the fires under control, the **Portuguese Red Cross** is now entering the **recovery phase** and focusing on providing **psychosocial support** and **social work** as opposed to evacuation and emergency medical services. The PRC's **326 staff and volunteers**, including 25 psychologists and five social workers from 39 branches and local structures continue to assist all people in need on the ground. PRC staff and volunteers will also receive **peer-to-peer support** and psychosocial support themselves following having been deployed to and experiencing very challenging emergency response situations.

Over the past 1.5 weeks, the PRC has assisted the **evacuation and transportation of 322 people**, provision of **emergency medical care for 146 people** and **psychosocial support for 446 people**. It has also managed **33 cases of family reunification** supporting the Civil Protection Authority in charge of this activity. The PRC has deployed three logistics units, 78 ambulances, a field healthcare clinic, two dead body management units and 200 body bags to support the overall response.

The Portuguese Red Cross has also launched a [national appeal](#) to raise funds for supporting the affected population.

Looking ahead: heatwave in Europe

Several countries across Europe are currently experiencing **continued hot and dry weather with new monthly records** of highest temperatures. Beside Portugal and Spain, record degrees were measured in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway and the UK with heatwave alerts issued in many of these countries. The Austrian Red Cross, British Red Cross, Luxembourg Red Cross, Magen David Adom in Israel, the Netherlands Red Cross and the Spanish Red Cross are among those already **prepared and actively informing the public** through media and social media on how to stay healthy and safe in the heat.

The **IFRC Regional Office for Europe** is closely following up the ongoing situation and the weather forecasts. It is also in **regular contact with the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies** across the Europe region – at Head of Country Cluster, Disaster Management, Health, Communications and Information Management levels – advising National Societies, as needed, on the preparation for response should the situation aggravate. Currently, national and local authorities and state health and meteorological services are covering the required activities and needs, and they are supported by National Societies in **raising the public's awareness** about the health risks and dos and don'ts. The regional office has circulated a **guidance note** to National Societies with important **health tips** useful for both the public and National Society staff and volunteers assisting them – the [guidance note is attached below](#) (see page 6 or follow link no. 3. under 'Click here' below). Additional **heatwave behaviour tips** can be viewed [in this video](#) created in partnership with the IFRC. The regional office's communications team has also published a **web story** on the heatwave which can be read [here](#).

The regional office will be considering the issuance of a separate, dedicated Information Bulletin on the heatwave and National Society response, as required, subject to the development of the situation.



Click here

1. Click [here](#) to see the map on the fires in Portugal
2. Click [here](#) to see the map on the fires in Spain
3. Click [here](#) to see the IFRC guidance note with health tips for heatwave
4. Click [here](#) to return to the title page

Contact information

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How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#) for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief and the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. The IFRC's vision is to inspire, **encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities** by National Societies, with a view to **preventing and alleviating human suffering**, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:



Save lives,
protect livelihoods,
and strengthen recovery
from disaster and crises.



Enable **healthy**
and **safe** living.



Promote social inclusion
and a culture of
non-violence and **peace**.

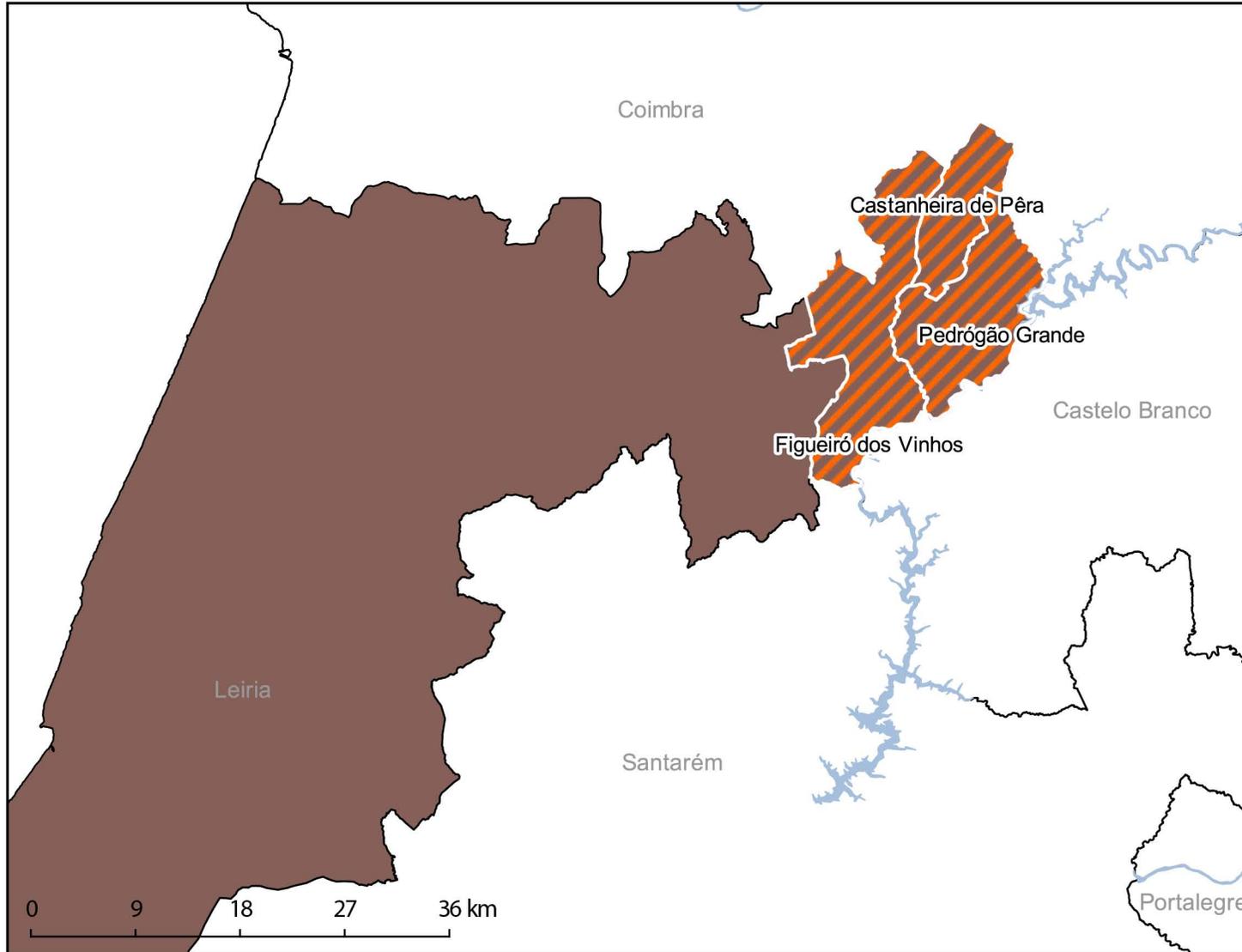
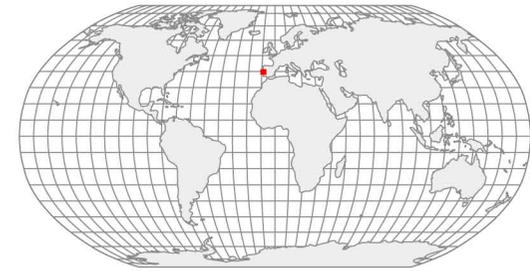


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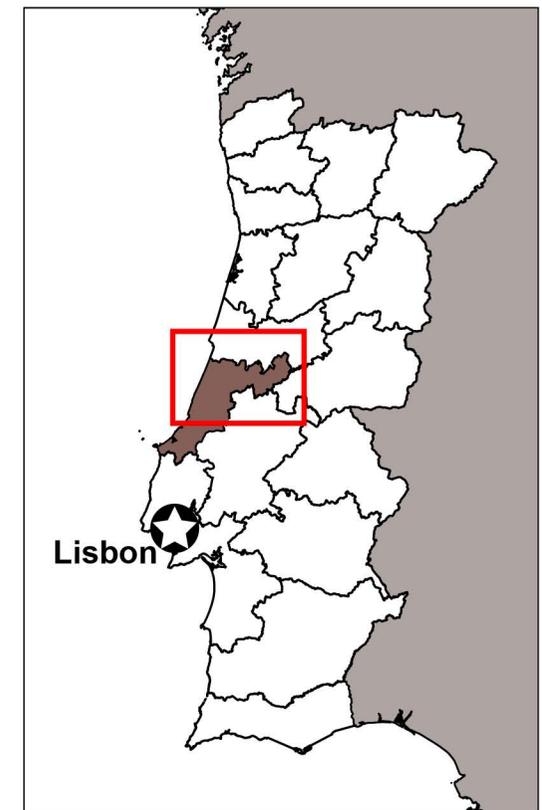
PORTUGAL: FOREST FIRES

IB1

19 June 2017



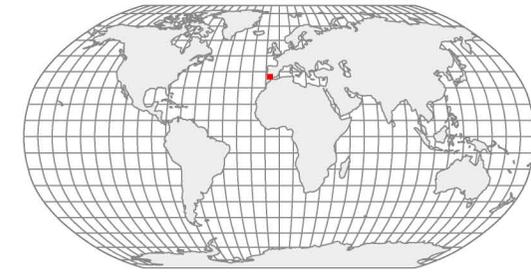
-  Fire-Affected Municipalities
-  Affected District
-  Other District



The maps used do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies or National Societies concerning the legal status of a territory or of its authorities.
Map data sources: GADM, IFRC



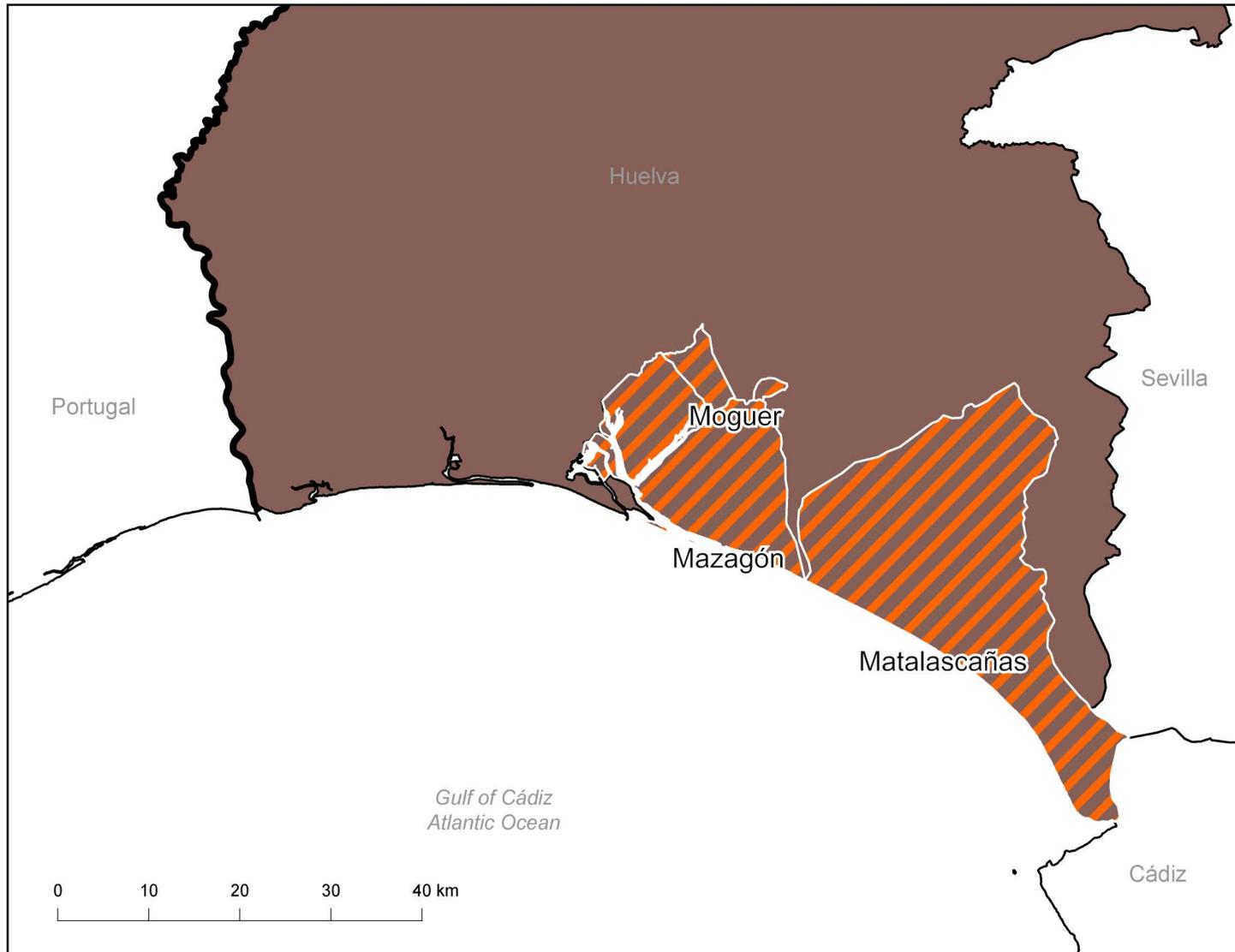
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PORTUGAL AND SPAIN: FOREST FIRES

IB3

27 June 2017



-  Fire-Affected Municipalities
-  Affected District
-  Other District



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Map data sources: GADM, IFRC



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Health tips: Heat wave

Stay well hydrated



Many health problems that can develop during a heat wave are associated with dehydration, so it is crucial to drink plenty of water or sports drinks with electrolytes. Remember to keep taking regular sips even if you don't feel thirsty.

- ✓ During a heat wave you should drink about four glasses of water every hour.
- ✓ Keep out of the heat – avoid being outside during the hottest part of the day (11am – 3pm). If you must go out, stay in the shade, apply sunscreen and wear a hat.
- ✓ Avoid drinks with a lot of caffeine such as coffee and tea, and limit intake of alcohol.

You should consult a doctor before increasing the amount of liquids if:

- you have epilepsy, or a heart, liver or kidney disease
- you are on a fluid-restricted diet or have a problem with fluid retention

Eat appropriately

It's important to make sure that you continue to eat as it's an effective method to control your body temperature. However, you should adapt your eating habits - eat light, well-balanced meals regularly rather than a few large meals a day as these are more difficult to digest leading to increased body temperature.

- ✓ Favor fresh fruit, vegetables, salads and other healthy snacks.
- ✓ Avoid foods that are rich in protein, such as meats.
- ✓ If you sweat a lot, remember to replace lost salts and minerals in addition to drinking water. A handful of salted nuts or pretzels, sports drinks with electrolytes, or fruit juices are good choices.

Heat exhaustion, heat stroke and heat cramps

Heat exhaustion, heat stroke and heat cramps are potentially serious conditions that can be caused by hot weather or strenuous physical exercise.



- ✓ During **heat exhaustion**, you become very hot and start to lose water or salt from your body.
- ✓ In a **heat stroke**, the body is no longer able to cool itself leading to dangerously high body temperature (in a sun stroke this is caused by prolonged exposure to direct sunlight).
- ✓ **Heat cramps** are muscular pains and spasms usually in the legs or abdomen caused by exposure to hot weather, humidity and loss of fluids and electrolytes. Heat cramps are often an early sign that the body is having difficulties.

Of these conditions heat stroke is less common, but more serious. It can put a strain on the brain, heart, lungs, liver and kidneys, and can be life-threatening. Untreated heat exhaustion can lead heat stroke.

Signs and symptoms

Heat exhaustion, heat stroke or heat cramps can develop in a few minutes, or gradually over several hours or days. Symptoms of heat exhaustion include:

- tiredness and weakness
- feeling faint or dizzy
- decrease in blood pressure
- headache
- muscle cramps
- feeling unwell or nauseated
- heavy sweating
- intense thirst
- rapid pulse
- irregular urination, urine is of a darker colour than usual

If heat exhaustion is left untreated, more severe symptoms of heat stroke can develop including confusion, disorientation, seizures and a loss of consciousness.

What to do

If you notice that someone has symptoms of heat exhaustion you should:



- ✓ **help them to lie down in a cool place** such as a room with air conditioning or in the shade.
- ✓ **remove any unnecessary clothing** to expose as much skin as possible.
- ✓ **cool their skin** with what you have available, such as a wet sponge or cloth, wrapping the body in a wet sheet, or placing cold packs around the neck and armpits.
- ✓ **fan the skin while it's moist** to help water evaporate and further cool the skin.
- ✓ **offer fluids**, ideally water, fruit juice or a rehydration drink.

Stay with the person until they are feeling better which should usually be within 30 minutes.

When to get medical help

Severe heat exhaustion or heat stroke requires hospital treatment.

Call an ambulance if:

- ✓ **the person doesn't respond to the above assistance within 30 minutes**
- ✓ **the person has severe symptoms, such as loss of consciousness, confusion or seizures**

Continue with the treatment outlined above until the ambulance arrives. If the person is unconscious, place them in a recovery position. If they have a seizure, try to prevent injury from nearby objects.

Vulnerable groups

Anyone can develop heat exhaustion or heat stroke during a heat wave but certain groups are at higher risk:

- ✓ the elderly
- ✓ babies and young children
- ✓ anyone with a long-term health condition, such as diabetes, heart or lung conditions
- ✓ anyone who is already ill and dehydrated (for example from gastroenteritis)
- ✓ anyone doing strenuous exercise for long periods, such as athletes and manual workers.

Stay safe!