
Texas-Oklahoma wildfires of 2005–06

The **Texas-Oklahoma wildfires of 2005-06** are a series of wildfires primarily in the states of Texas and Oklahoma that began November 27, 2005, and continue into April 2006. Surrounding states have also been affected to a lesser extent.

The fires were triggered by a combination of record high temperatures, drought, and high winds in the region. The situation has been exacerbated, at least in Texas, by plentiful rains in recent years. The rains encouraged vegetation growth, which then dried out over the winter drought leaving more potential fuel. The unusually dry conditions have been attributed to La Niña.[1] At Will Rogers World Airport in Oklahoma City, only 0.36 inches (9.1 mm) of rain fell in the first two months of the year.[2] As of January 1, fires continue to develop throughout the two states. On January 3, many of the fires were reported to be under control. But outbreaks continued through January, February, and March.

In Texas, 11 people were killed. Eight Texas towns were evacuated in March 2006.[1] From December 26, 2005, to April 3, 2006, Texas suffered 11,048 wildfires which burned 4903851 acres (19845 km²) and destroyed 423 homes.[3] In Oklahoma, 869 homes were damaged; 300 of them were destroyed.[4] As of April 5, 2006, there had been over 22,564 wildfires across the country in the year to date, burning 1872701 acres (7579 km²).[5]

The Governor of Texas, Rick Perry, has declared the entire state a disaster area and has called upon firefighters and fire equipment to combat the blazes. [6] He has also described the state as a "tinderbox". In addition, the Governor of Oklahoma, Brad Henry, has also declared a disaster and has pleaded for federal aid. On January 10, the President declared several Oklahoma counties to be disaster areas; the list was amended to include 26 counties by late March.

Heavy rains in late March promised at least temporary relief to the affected areas. Governor Brad Henry lifted the burn ban (which had been instated in November) throughout Oklahoma on March 22, but reinstated it for most counties only 5 days later, on March 27.[7] Much of Texas was also placed under a burn ban.

Selected Major Fires

Callisburg, Texas

A fire in a rural area in Callisburg and Walnut Bend, Texas, near the Oklahoma border in Cooke County, was still burning on December 29. There were at least 10 to 20 buildings destroyed, plus more outbuildings. At least 5000 acres (20 km²) of land were scorched. [8] One person was killed in the area due to the fires. [9]

Cross Plains, Texas

On December 27, 2005, 116 homes were destroyed by a large fire in and around Cross Plains. On December 29, 2005 the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) listed 85 single family homes, 25 mobile homes and 6 apartment units as being destroyed. An additional 36 homes were damaged. The 120 year old First United Methodist Church of Cross Plains was also destroyed. Two people died after being trapped in their houses.

The fire started 5 miles (8 km) west of the city along Highway 36 and westerly winds of up to 30 mph (50 km/h) spread the flames into town burning a total of 7665 acres (31 km²) of land. The fire spared the nearly century-old house (now a museum) of Robert E. Howard, author of the *Conan the Barbarian* books.

Mustang, Oklahoma

Several houses were burned in the area of Mustang, Oklahoma, just outside Oklahoma City in Canadian County. The cause was unknown, but several houses were burned by the flames. At least 400 acres (1.6 km²) of land were scorched.

Guthrie, Oklahoma

On the evening of January 1, a major fire developed in a suburban area near Guthrie (near Oklahoma City) which is currently burning. Many buildings - presumably single-family homes - were burned (according to television coverage). Two neighborhoods were evacuated.

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Fires broken intermittently within city limits. One grass fire early in January received national attention as it consumed several buildings. High winds on April 6 and 7 with gusts of 40-50 mph created high potential for dangerous fires. At least 18 fires developed in Oklahoma City on these days. Outbreaks also occurred in the Texas Panhandle and elsewhere in Oklahoma, burning six homes in Kingfisher and forcing the evacuation of Cement, Reydon, and Cheyenne. Part of Oklahoma City was evacuated on April 7 when a fire from previous day was revived by high winds.

External links

- Storm Prediction Center: Fire Weather ^[10]
- FEMA: Texas Extreme Wildfire Threat ^[11]

References

- [1] <http://www.cnn.com/2006/US/03/24/wildfires.preview/index.html>
- [2] <http://hoot.metr.ou.edu/>
- [3] <http://www.tdi.state.tx.us/consumer/wildfires.html>
- [4] <http://www.ok.gov/oem/index.php?view=article&id=2301>
- [5] <http://www.nifc.gov/fireinfo/nfn.html>
- [6] <http://www.gadsdentimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20051229/ZNYT02/512290354/1011>
- [7] <http://www.ok.gov/~okag/forestry-fireupdates.htm>
- [8] http://www.woai.com/news/state/story.aspx?content_id=95F38AD9-26B4-4C19-869E-0BA8CC31A5FC
- [9] <http://www.gainesville.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20051228/LOCAL/51228012/1078/news>
- [10] http://www.spc.noaa.gov/products/fire_wx/
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