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Climate, fuel, planning and social behavior: Potentials forest fire risk

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Paradoxically, everything indicates that the cost of suppressing forest fires is increasing and that it's associated with greater investment and efficiency in emergency services. In general terms, three main causes can explain this upward trend: fuel accumulation (associated with the suppression of past forest fires), urban development in areas prone to fire episodes and the current trend of climate change. Although it's hopeless, but it seems that the human being has little capacity to stop the effects of the climate on the risk of forest fire. The opposite is an anthropocentric illusion. On the other hand, it's hard to think of a Public Administration that can allocate economic budgets for the management and control of fuel that are in tune with the rate of accumulation of these. Science fiction would be to imagine that such accumulation could be reversed. Given this scenario of initial disabilities, the focus of hope on society can be put. The humans have a preponderant role in the number of ignitions (negligent or intentional) in Spain, so it will be of great importance to try to modify the behavior of the owners, current and future, with respect to the potential risk of forest fire and, very especially, in those cases where there are human settlements in areas prone to register emergencies due to forest fire, such as urban forest interface areas (IUF). After experiencing a large forest fire, there are changes in the perception of risk and in the general attitude towards forest fires in the owners of homes in the affected area. Therefore, we infer that only from the understanding of the potential fire risk, the owners will be in the best conditions to undertake actions aimed at reducing the risk. Environmental education about forest fires can motivate homeowners to undertake prevention and self-protection actions to reduce risk and possible damage to property and people. At the society level, perhaps one of the best ways to combat the drama of forest fires is to create more fire-resistant containment and defense structures, mainly in the most critical risk areas such as those of IUF. In this study, supported by numerous works carried out in the US Forest Service and in other recent investigations by the author in Spain, we carried out an analysis of some aspects that we consider essential in the risk of forest fire, due to its ability to enhance and modulate the evolution of fire.

Biography

Jaime Senabre is a Psychologist and Environmental Consultant. Chief of Brigade in a Forest Fire Service with more than 20 years of experience. He collaborates with several companies and institutions in the area of training in Psychology in Emergencies and Human Resources. He is Professor at the University of Valencia in the Master in "Intervention and operational coordination in emergencies and catastrophes" and other postgraduate courses on emergencies. Director and President of the International Scientific- Professional Committee of the National Symposium on Forest Fires (SINIF). He has lectured internationally and has been part of the Organizing Committee of several International Congresses on Earth Sciences and Climate Change. He is part of the Editorial Board of several international scientific journals. He has published articles on forest fires, stress, psychosocial risks and emotional trauma, mainly in relation to emergency services and natural disasters. Currently, he is assigned to the Research Group on "Climate and Territorial Planning" (University of Alicante), where he researches on the social perception of forest fire risk and behavior in the event of possible disasters.

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