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Canadian wildfires cause large-scale evacuations

Canada is no stranger to wildfires, but this week's ferocious blaze in Fort McMurray is extreme — even by Canadian standards. 80,000 people have fled from the heart of tar sands country in an [unprecedented](#) evacuation effort.

As people consign their homes and belongings to the flames and firefighters struggle to contain the blaze, there's an inevitable question: Do we have climate change to thank for the intensity of this fire?

This issue is emerging all over the world as shifts in the climate drive environmental imbalances that promote the spread of fire. Droughts turn the landscape into tinder, and tree die-offs create ample fuel for fast-moving, incredibly hot fires that can whip through the landscape at terrifying speeds.

The fire started out as relatively ordinary and controllable on Tuesday morning, but then [conditions shifted](#). High temperatures — soaring into the 90s — and very low humidity created an environment unsafe for firefighters on the ground.

The growing fire prompted the government to order an evacuation. Citizens fled to nearby regions of Canada, with many taking up residency in temporary shelters, as well as in the homes of families, friends and generous strangers. Vehicles clogged the roads as people attempted to get out of the area, bringing family pets and any belongings they'd managed to collect before leaving — and in some cases [running out of fuel](#) on the way.

At least [1,600 homes](#) were destroyed overnight as firefighters from across Canada labored to control the flames. Emergency responders hoped that changing weather conditions on Wednesday would give them an edge in the fight.

Photo credit US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Read more: <http://www.care2.com/causes/horrific-canadian-wildfire-forces-80000-to-evacuate.html#ixzz47ypeY1nN>

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