# Wildfire incidents in Scotland surge to record highs amid extreme weather and human activity



The presence of extreme wildfire risk in Scotland has become a pressing concern, particularly in light of recent hot and dry weather conditions that create an environment conducive to fire spread. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) reports that human activity is the main cause of these devastating fires. Area Commander Michael Humphreys has stressed the importance of responsible behaviour, urging the public to refrain from using naked flames and barbecues during such high-risk periods. He noted, "It only takes one spark to start a wildfire, and things can get out of hand very, very quickly."

Recent trends indicate that Scotland is facing a significant spike in wildfire incidents, surpassing historical averages. As of early 2025, Scotland and Northern Ireland have experienced an alarming increase, with over 140 wildfires in Northern Ireland alone. In the previous year, wildfires were reported to have reached 48 across the UK, a marked rise from an annual average of just 15 between 2006 and 2024. This worrying trend is largely attributed to climate change, which is intensifying summer heat and shifting land use practices, creating the perfect storm for wildfires.

The implications of wildfires extend far beyond immediate environmental damage. Communities in rural areas are particularly vulnerable, and wildfires pose a profound threat to livestock, farmland, and protected wildlife habitats. Previous incidents, such as the Cannich wildfire in May 2023, serve as stark reminders of this threat. The Cannich fire, one of the largest in UK history, burned extensively in the Highlands, devastating local ecosystems and prompting multiple high-level warnings from the SFRS.

The economic and social ramifications are significant, placing an added burden on firefighting resources and community well-being. Forestry and Land Scotland has outlined that the majority of wildfires result from human actions, often accidental, reinforcing the need for heightened public awareness and adherence to safety protocols. They advise individuals to responsibly manage outdoor activities by following the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, particularly during dry spells, as this can significantly mitigate the risk of wildfires.

In response to the increasing intensity and frequency of wildfires, local officials and emergency services convened a summit in the Highlands after multiple significant blazes. This gathering highlighted the urgent need for proactive measures to combat the escalating wildfire threat. With improved planning, such as the implementation of wildfire management strategies and careful vegetation management, communities can better prepare for and respond to these devastating incidents.

As public caution remains paramount, fire chiefs and environmental groups alike encourage adherence to fire safety advice. The heightened risks experienced in Scotland underline the fragility of the natural environment and the urgent call to action for responsible behaviour, especially during periods of extreme weather. The collective effort to reduce the human-caused ignition of wildfires is not just a regulatory obligation; it is a crucial step in safeguarding Scotland’s rural communities and its unique natural heritage.

### Reference Map

1. Lead Article
2. Summary (2)
3. Summary (3)
4. Summary (4)
5. Summary (5)
6. Summary (6)
7. Summary (7)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25168030.scotland-extreme-wildfire-risk-amid-no-flame-plea/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/4c922fad-6db9-47e6-8687-cc2ab7372309> - The UK is experiencing a significant surge in wildfires, with incidents far exceeding historical averages. As of early April 2025, Scotland and Northern Ireland have been particularly affected. In Galloway, a massive fire visible from space was brought under control after days of intense firefighting. Meanwhile, Northern Ireland authorities have managed over 140 wildfires in a short span, including a major incident in the Mourne Mountains. The number of wildfires across the UK has reached 48 this year, compared to an average of 15 from 2006 to 2024, with 286 incidents reported in England and Wales alone. Experts link this increase to climate change, citing hotter, drier summers and altered land use practices as key contributors. Fire chiefs and environmental groups emphasize improved planning, including the creation of wildfire management strategies and controlled vegetation burning, though the latter remains controversial. The heightened wildfire risk underscores the need for public caution and proactive land management as climate conditions continue to evolve.
3. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cannich_wildfire> - The Cannich wildfire, which occurred in the Scottish Highlands in May 2023, was one of the largest recorded in the UK. The fire burned for several months, causing extensive damage to the Corrimony nature reserve and surrounding woodlands. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service issued multiple 'very high' wildfire warnings during this period, urging the public to exercise caution and follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. The incident highlighted the increasing frequency and intensity of wildfires in Scotland, emphasizing the need for proactive measures to prevent such events.
4. <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/what-we-do/health-safety-wellbeing/wildfires-v2> - Forestry and Land Scotland emphasizes that the majority of wildfires in Scotland are caused by human activity, often accidentally. They highlight the significant social and economic impacts of wildfires, including the strain on firefighting resources and potential damage to rural communities. The organization recommends several fire safety tips to help prevent wildfires, such as calling 999 if a wildfire is spotted, following the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, being cautious with stoves and barbecues during dry periods, and responsibly disposing of cigarettes.
5. <https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/news/scotland-sees-fourth-wildfire-warning-in-three-weeks/> - In June 2023, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service issued its fourth wildfire warning in three weeks due to an increased risk of wildfires across Scotland. The warning highlighted the potential for rapid and intense fires that could devastate large areas. The SFRS urged the public to avoid lighting disposable barbecues or campfires in areas with dry vegetation and to discard cigarettes responsibly. The warning emphasized the heightened risk of wildfires during the warm and dry weather conditions.
6. <https://www.ross-shirejournal.co.uk/news/highland-wildfires-are-likely-to-get-more-intense-longer-a-320746/> - A wildfire summit in the Highlands, convened after significant blazes at Cannich and Daviot, concluded that wildfires are likely to become more intense, longer, and more frequent unless action is taken. The meeting, attended by politicians, land managers, and emergency services, underscored the need for proactive measures to address the escalating wildfire risk in the region.
7. <https://news.stv.tv/scotland/very-high-risk-warnings-issued-over-wildfire-threat> - In July 2023, 'very high risk' warnings were issued across Scotland due to the threat of wildfires. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service emphasized the significant impact of wildfires on rural and remote communities, including potential damage to livestock, farmland, wildlife, protected woodlands, and sites of special scientific interest. The SFRS urged the public to act safely and responsibly in rural environments and to follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code to reduce the risk of wildfires.