# Wildfires in British Columbia Cause Air Quality Alerts in Minnesota and Wisconsin



On May 13, 2024, authorities in Minnesota and Wisconsin issued air quality alerts due to smoke from over 100 wildfires burning in British Columbia, Canada. This smoke significantly impacted air quality across both states, affecting regions like Madison, Wisconsin and as far east as Minneapolis, Minnesota. In response, local environmental agencies advised residents to limit outdoor activities and ensure vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, and those with respiratory conditions stayed indoors.

The largest of these fires, the Parker Lake wildfire near Fort Nelson, British Columbia, exacerbated by strong wind events, triggered evacuations of over 3,000 people starting May 10. This fire alone has consumed an area of approximately 5,000 hectares (about 20 square miles). Air quality worsened to unhealthy levels across southern Minnesota and parts of central Wisconsin, with visibility affected by heavy smoke.

Officials, including Cliff Chapman, Director of Operations at the British Columbia Wildfire Service, urged immediate evacuation, citing extremely dry conditions and sustained winds which threatened further escalation. Forecasts anticipated a possible reduction in smoke spread by the following Tuesday due to slowing winds.

These events are part of a broader pattern of intense wildfire seasons in Canada, attributed by experts to climate change and persistent drought conditions in the region.