

Sydney bush fires combine to form 'mega-fire'

9th December, 2019



Firefighters in the Australian state of New South Wales are battling what is being called the worst fire ever seen in the region. Eight different bushfires have combined north of the city of Sydney to form what people have dubbed a "mega-fire". The gigantic blaze is just an hour's drive from Sydney. Tens of thousands of homes, businesses and other properties are in its path. The giant inferno is burning across a swath of land covering over 300,000 hectares. The front of the mega-fire is roughly 60km wide. Authorities say it is burning out of control and is too vast to contain. Fire Service Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers said: "We cannot stop these fires. They will just keep burning until conditions ease."

The ease with which over 100 separate fires are spreading across the state has been exacerbated by a prolonged drought. This is concerning authorities who say it is very early in the season for the ground to be so dry. A spokesman said: "There's a tough couple of months ahead and we've already seen the horrific consequences of fire so far this season." People in Sydney are suffering from hazardous and toxic smoke from the fire. The city is shrouded in the choking smoke. Residents have received advisories about exercising outside. Locals say it is the "worst ever" fire and is "unprecedented". An official said: "Peoples' emotions are very, very tested and frail at the moment."

Sources: aljazeera.com / smh.com.au / abc.net.au

Writing

Climate change is responsible for the increase in natural disasters. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

firefighters / fire / city / Sydney / homes / inferno / out of control / vast / burning / ease / drought / authorities / season / consequences / smoke / toxic / exercise / frail

True / False

- a) Firefighters in Australia say a bushfire is one of the worst they've seen. T / F
- b) The bushfire is a combination of eight different fires. T / F
- c) The bushfire left a path of tens of thousands destroyed homes. T / F
- d) A firefighter boss said they cannot stop the fires. T / F
- e) A long drought has made the fires worse. T / F
- f) Authorities say the ground was too damp for fires to spread. T / F
- g) A spokesperson said there was a tough few years ahead. T / F
- h) Residents in Sydney have received no advice about exercising outside. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| 1. battling | a. covered |
| 2. combined | b. fire |
| 3. dubbed | c. distinct |
| 4. inferno | d. amalgamated |
| 5. ease | e. elongated |
| 6. separate | f. poisonous |
| 7. prolonged | g. fighting |
| 8. toxic | h. delicate |
| 9. shrouded | i. named |
| 10. frail | j. abate |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you know about Sydney?
- b) Why does Australia have so many bushfires?
- c) How would you deal with a bushfire?
- d) What damage do bushfires do?
- e) How worried are you about fires?
- f) What should the firefighters do?
- g) What do you think of firefighters?
- h) What advice do you have for the people of Sydney?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. what people have dubbed | a. to contain |
| 2. businesses and other properties | b. choking smoke |
| 3. Authorities say it is burning | c. drought |
| 4. too vast | d. and frail |
| 5. keep burning until conditions | e. out of control |
| 6. exacerbated by a prolonged | f. toxic smoke |
| 7. the horrific consequences | g. are in its path |
| 8. suffering from hazardous and | h. ease |
| 9. The city is shrouded in the | i. a "mega-fire" |
| 10. emotions are very, very tested | j. of fire |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- What can Australia do to ease drought conditions?
- What hazards are there to our health from bushfires?
- To what degree has global warming made the bushfires worse?
- Why is the earth seeing more natural disasters?
- What is the worst disaster seen by your town?
- When in your life have you felt frail?
- What questions would you like to ask a firefighter?

Spelling

- what people have bubedd a "mega-fire"
- The gigantic zalbe
- The giant reifnon is burning
- the mega-fire is hurglyo 60km wide
- too avst to contain
- keep burning until conditions seea
- exacerbated by a prolonged udhtrgo
- a thquo couple of months ahead
- the horrific engsesuenocc of fire
- suffering from zaaurshod and toxic smoke
- The city is eduordsh in the choking smoke
- aflri at the moment

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. d	3. i	4. b	5. j
6. c	7. e	8. f	9. a	10. h

Role Play

Role A – Smartphone

You think your smartphone is the most important thing to rescue in the event of a fire. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as important to rescue. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): clothes, pet or money.

Role B – Clothes

You think clothes the most important things to rescue in the event of a fire. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as important to rescue. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): smartphone, pet or money.

Role C – A Pet

You think a pet is the most important thing to rescue in the event of a fire. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as important to rescue. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): clothes, smartphone or money.

Role D – Money

You think money is the most important thing to rescue in the event of a fire. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as important to rescue. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): clothes, pet or smartphone.

Speaking – Escape

Rank these with your partner. Put the most important things to take in the event of a fire at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|--------------|----------------------|
| • Smartphone | • Passport |
| • Clothes | • Photos |
| • A pet | • Food |
| • Money | • Favourite soft toy |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	F	d	T	e	T	f	F	g	F	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.