

# After nearly 7,000 wildfires in Texas last year, a wet winter could reduce the risk in 2024

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*Courtesy / Texas A&M Forest Service*

Firefighters face a wildfire in near Possum Kingdom Lake in Palo Pinto county on June 29, 2023.

The dormant wildfire season — which has produced nearly all of the 30 largest wildfires in Texas — is here, but data from the Texas A&M Forest Service suggest this may be a mild year thanks to El Niño.

After a summer of intense heat, [drought conditions have reduced](#), said Lucas Kanclerz, a fire analyst with the Texas A&M Forest Service's Predictive Services Department.

"We've seen a reduction in the drought that we were building into over the summer from the recent precipitation that occurred in mid- and late December," he said. "There may be some drought that persists just because of the lingering spring rainfall deficits from

the summer. But for parts of east Texas they're actually showing drought improvement or even drought removal."

The Dallas-Fort Worth area recorded its third highest average temperature last summer at 88.7 degrees. The highest average temperature for the area was in 2011 at 90.5 degrees, [according to National Weather Service](#) data.

Last year was also the fourth driest summer in the area.

The [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) announced the El Niño climate pattern returned in June last year.

Kanclerz said this typically means wetter conditions for Texas.

"With the El Niño conditions that are forecast, that typically means that Texas is more in a moist and cool environment through the winter and early spring months," he said.

## How will this year compare to last year?

Between volunteer and municipal fire departments and the Texas A&M Forest Service, there were 6,998 wildfires reported last year, Kanclerz said.

After a wet pattern in spring, Kanclerz said conditions quickly pivoted to hot and dry weather, or flash drought, by July.

"We went from having no fires to seeing a really rapid increase in wildfire activity by mid-July," he said. The season peaked in August with more than 500 fires statewide.

Texas wildfires are not exclusive to the hot summer months.

The dormant season, which spans from January to May, has seen the majority of large, high impact wildfires in recent Texas history.

In March 2022, the Eastern Complex fires burned more than 54,000 acres, making them the largest and most destructive wildfires that year, [according to AgriLife Today](#).

The wildfire outlook [this dormant season](#) is expected to be normal to below normal because of a rainy December and above-normal precipitation chances predicted in the

As far as what the summer, or growing, wildfire season might look like, Kanclerz said it's still too early to predict. He said there are several factors the Forest Service will have to look at as the year goes on.

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