

## **Helicopters in Chile douse fire that destroyed 200 homes**

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***Firefighters walk at the scene of a fire in Valparaiso, Chile, December 24, 2019. (REUTERS/Rodrigo Garrido)***

**Santiago (Chile):** Helicopters dropped thousands of gallons of water on the outskirts of the Chilean port city of Valparaiso on Wednesday to extinguish a fire that destroyed more than 200 homes.

Dozens of people living in the city's Rocuant and San Roque hills sifted through the ruins of their homes after strong winds whipped the blaze through their neighborhoods Tuesday. Residents had been evacuated and there were no reports of casualties.

The fire destroyed more than 200 homes and affected more than 1,000 people, Agriculture Minister Antonio Walker said Wednesday evening.

Earlier, Interior Minister Gonzalo Blumel said authorities believe arson caused the blaze and urged people to report any suspicious activity.

"We're not certain, but everything indicates that yesterday's fire was intentional, and began in an area quite close to the homes," said Ezio Passadore, emergency manager for Valparaiso.

The fire was doused in urban areas but remained "active" in the woods, said Ricardo Toro, head of Chile's national emergency office.

Many homes in the low-income neighborhoods where the fire occurred don't have running water and get their supply from tanker trucks a couple of times a week.

Wildfires have affected parts of Valparaiso several times in the last month as Chile contends with its worst drought on record.

- AP