

## **Greece Villages Evacuated As Forest Fires Rage, 62 Fire Engines, 17 Planes Deployed**

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Six villages and two monasteries were evacuated after the fire broke out on Wednesday evening.

*Forest fire raged overnight around the protected wildlife habitat of Mount Geraneia, Greece.*

**Greece:** Scores of Greek villagers were evacuated early Thursday as a forest fire raged overnight around the protected wildlife habitat of Mount Geraneia, the fire department said, with no injuries immediately reported.

Six villages and two monasteries were evacuated after the fire broke out on Wednesday evening near the village of Skinos on the Gulf of Corinth, some 90 kilometres (56 miles) west of Athens, a spokesman told AFP.

Fire department chief Stefanos Kolokouris said reinforcements had been rushed in from around the country to contain the blaze.

"The situation is clearly better now," Kolokouris told Skai TV.

"It's a large fire in a pine forest (and the) terrain is difficult."

Kolokouris said he believed the fire could be brought under control during the course of the day.

Billowing clouds of smoke were visible in the capital.

Many locals have summer homes in the area, but lives are not in immediate threat, fire officials said.

However, electricity has been knocked out in the area and could take 48 hours to restore service, according to state grid technicians on the scene.

"This is the first major fire of 2021... communities have been evacuated as a precaution," fire department spokesman Vassilis Vathrakogiannis had earlier told Skai.

"We have no information (that people's lives were threatened) and we have not had to rescue anyone," he said.

Over 180 firemen with 62 fire engines have been deployed to the area, backed by 17 planes and three helicopters, the fire department tweeted.

Some homes have been damaged, fire officials said.

Wildfires pose a challenge for Greece every year during the dry summer season, with strong winds and temperatures frequently exceeding 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit).

In 2018, 102 people died in the coastal resort of Mati, near Athens, in Greece's worst fire disaster.

- AFP