

North Macedonia: Fires

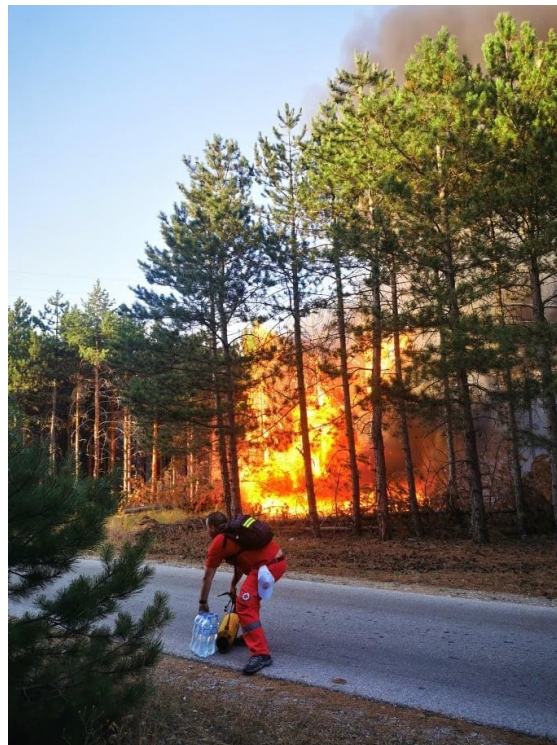
Information Bulletin, 09.08.2021

Summary:

Starting from July 30, 2021 Republic of North Macedonia was hit by tremendous heat wave that resulted with severe fires in several regions in the country that are raging for 6 days and they are still not under control despite the enormous efforts of the state institutions responsible for crisis management as well as the local population.

The most affected regions are as follows:

Strumica region, Kochani region, Kumanovo region, Gevgelija region, Valandovo region, Bitola and Prilep region, Shtip region, Berovo and Pehchevo region, Skopje region, Tetovo region, Radovish region, Ohrid region, Kriva Palanka region.



In the past week the Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia is in constant communication and coordination with the state institutions on central and local level. At the moment, the Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia is in process of providing immediate support to the state emergency response teams in putting down the fires and the national society is making field assessment and collecting and processing information obtained from the Red Cross branches and the state institutions and will subsequently develop a plan of action to assist the affected population.

The situation

Republic of North Macedonia has been struck by tremendous heat wave that resulted with numerous fires country wide. The heat wave started in the last days of July and the extremely hot weather is expected to continue until August 15.

The hot weather and high temperatures resulted with intensive recurring fires in many regions in the country in the last 10 days. The severe fires in numerous regions in the country resulted with devastation of many forests, fertile land and property of the population. Unfortunately one casualty is reported in the fires and several injured persons (inhaling smoke) due to the fires. Numerous houses have been burnt and damaged in many villages, as well as other facilities. A lot of forests, fertile land and crops have been destroyed by the fires.

The crisis management system of the country is coordinating the efforts to put down the fires and assist the affected population. Response teams from the Fire Brigade, Crisis Management



Center, Directorate for Protection and Rescue, the Army, and the Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia are coordinating the efforts in the field in order to cope and respond to the crisis situation. However, due to the limited resources of the state for dealing with fires (no available air tractors for firefighting) and only two army helicopters available for firefighting, this resulted with expansion of wild fires almost on the whole territory of the country.

The Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia with all material and human resources, in frames of its possibilities, is participating in the overall efforts of the state authorities to respond to the crisis situation.

The weather forecast for the forthcoming days is extreme high temperatures with +40°C, which unfortunately means that the situation with the raging fires would continue in the next 10 days.

Activities of the state institutions:

The overall coordination of the emergency situation due to the heat wave and fires in the country is coordinated by the Crisis Management Centre. The response operation is supported by the national and local teams of the Fire Brigade, Crisis Management Center, Directorate for Protection and Rescue, the Army, and the Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia, Ministry of Health and other responsible institutions and the local population.

Firefighters and local population are fighting the fires around the clock in various regions of the country. However, due to limited specialized firefighting equipment, wildfires continue to spread throughout the country. The state has three firefighting aircraft, but they are not in operation (service required) and the only air support for firefighting is provided by two army helicopters.

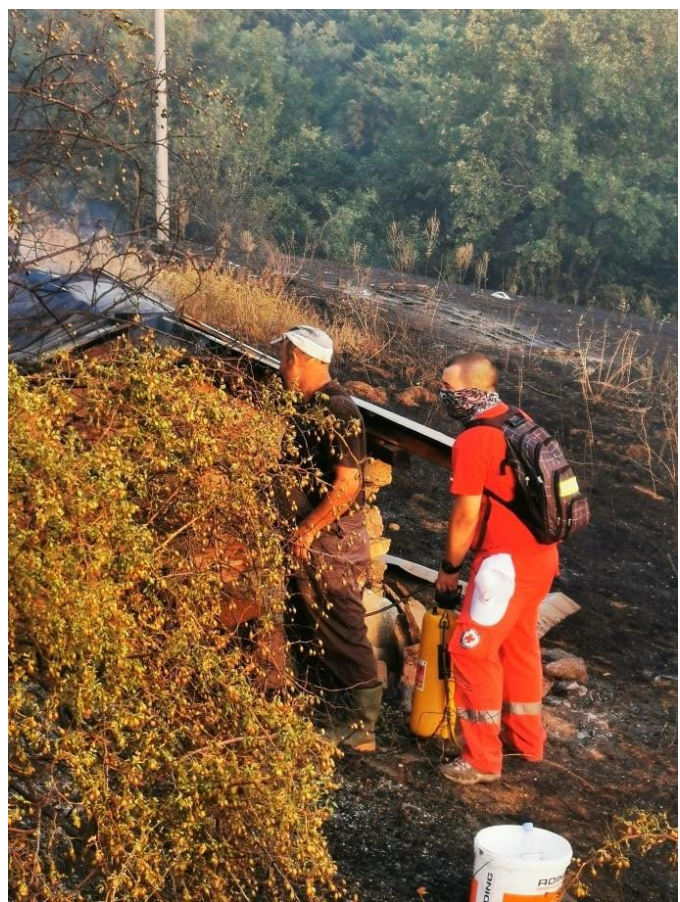
As of August 4, the country also has international assistance from Serbia, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Austria and Romania, which are assisting with the firefighting operation with aircraft, equipment, vehicles, and human resources.

On its session held on August 4th the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia declared state of crisis on the whole territory of the country for a period of 30 days.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Activities of the Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia

The Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia as member of the Crisis



Management HQ is actively involved in the operation and is regularly updated with new information about the situation in the state and is instructed for providing the necessary support for meeting the immediate challenges due to the crisis situation.

In the crisis regions the Red Cross branches of RNM mobilized the emergency response teams and they are on the field with the representatives of the state institutions providing logistics support and distributing water, food and hygiene items, blankets and mattresses. The Red Cross is supporting the response teams of the state institutions and making assessment in the field to appraise the immediate needs of the local population affected by the fires.

- On August 2nd, the emergency response team of the RC Branch Kochani visited the fire affected region on the territory of the municipality of Kochani to make assessment of the needs in the fire affected region. The fire destroyed big property of the local population, crops, land and cattle and bees, as well as grape plantations. Two houses were burned by the fire. 10 Red Cross volunteers supported the efforts of the firefighters.
- On August 3th, the emergency response team of the RC Branch Kumanovo (8 volunteers) provided support for firefighting in the vicinity of the villages Stepance, Zeglane and Malotino, municipality Staro Nagoricane. The wild fire covered vast territory with forest and dry grass and endangered houses, stables and summer houses. The RC team supplemented the efforts of the Fire Brigade of Staro Nagoricane.
- On August 3th, the emergency response team of the RC Branch Kriva Palanka (comprised of 7 volunteers) provided support for firefighting in the vicinity of the villages Varovishte, municipality Kriva Palanka and the village Otoshnica, municipality Rankovce. The wild fire covered vast territory with forest and dry grass and endangered houses, stables and summer houses.
- On August 4th the National Emergency Response Team (6 persons) headed by the Coordinator visited several affected regions to make a detailed assessment of the needs and to coordinate the support provided by the emergency response teams of the RC branches (comprised of trained volunteers) who are supporting the state authorities in their efforts to deal with the fires. The RCRNM Team visited the village Umlena which is seriously affected by the fire to coordinate the work of the Red Cross volunteers.
- On August 4th, the emergency response team of the RC Branch Delchevo (comprised of 4 volunteers) provided logistics support for the response firefighting teams and the local population affected by the forest fire, dry grass which also affected the house in the Delchevo-Pehchevo region. The Red Cross team provided logistics support for evacuation of the people. 960 bottles of water were distributed.
- On August 4th, the emergency response team of the RC Branch Veles (comprised of 4 volunteers) delivered 1400 bottles of water (0.5 lit) to the neighboring RC Branch Berovo to assist the firefighters on the territories of Pehcevo and Delchevo.



- On August 4th, the emergency response team of the City Red Cross of Skopje provided humanitarian assistance for a family in the village Staro Nagoricane whose house was burnt by the fire.
- On August 5th the emergency response teams of the Red Cross Branch Shtip (4 volunteers), Red Cross Branch Kochani (4 volunteers), Red Cross Branch Berovo (4 volunteers) Red Cross Branch Delchevo (4 volunteers), City Red Cross of Skopje (8 volunteers) are present in their municipalities providing logistics support to the institutions and citizens for fighting the fires on the territory of the municipality of Pehchevo.
- On August 5th the Red Cross of the Republic of RNM distributed humanitarian assistance in the following regions:
 - Berovo/Pehchevo region: 500 food parcels, 500 hygiene parcels, 2592 bottles potable water (0.5l), 50 mattresses
 - Kumanovo region: 100 food parcels, 100 hygiene parcels, 2592 bottles potable water (0.5l), 400 blankets, 50 mattresses
- On August 6th the Red Cross of the Republic of RNM distributed humanitarian assistance in the following regions:
 - Delchevo region: 100 food parcels, 100 hygiene parcels, 2592 bottles potable water (0.5l), 400 blankets, 20 mattresses.
 - Kochani region: 100 food parcels, 100 hygiene parcels, 2592 bottles potable water (0.5l), 400 blankets, 50 mattresses.
- On August 6, the Disaster response team of the Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia distributed humanitarian aid to the population affected by the fires in Kriva Palanka. The humanitarian aid consisted of 50 food parcels, 50 hygiene parcels, 1260 bottles of water - 0.5 liters, 100 blankets and 10 mattresses.
- On August 6, representatives of the Red Cross branches in Berovo and Kocani met with the paramedic team of the Austrian Red Cross, which accompanies the convoy of firefighters from Austria to provide first aid to firefighters in the Pehchevo region. Distributed 600 bottles of water in the region of the village Budinarci. Volunteers are deployed in the field to distribute water and sandwiches to the fire brigade.
- On August 6, in the village Otoshnica affected by several days of fire, the Red Cross Kriva Palanka distributed 120 liters of water or 80 bottles of 1.5 liters of water from the stock reserves and a donation from the municipality of 10 lunch packages of food and 48 bottles of 0.5 liters of water.
- On August 7, at the place called Klanica, industrial zone, a fire broke out in which a team from the Red Cross Kriva Palanka were among the first on the spot and alerted the responsible institutions, the population was alarmed and did not catch on some of the houses in the neighborhood, only yards were set on fire. Kriva Palanka Red Cross distributed 12 bottles of 1.5 liters of water from the commodity reserves.
- On August 6 and 7, the mobile team of the Red Cross Delchevo distributed 336 bottles of 0.5 liters of water and 336 bottles of 1.5 liters of water and 150 sandwiches for the teams dealing with the fire around the village of Razlovci. Clothing and food were also distributed to 2 evacuees. 4 people and one vehicle were engaged in the entire operation.

- On August 7, the Red Cross Branch Stip visited the village Bogoslovec, which was caught by the fire on August 6. Bottled water was distributed to the teams that fought the fire, and withdrew from the field after successful interventions. A visit was made by the Red Cross to the teams of the key institutions of the crisis management system: fire brigade, police and ambulance and 32 water packages were distributed. 4 people and one off-road vehicle were engaged in the entire operation.

Psychological support: The Red Cross of RNM opened SOS telephone lines for psychological first aid for the affected population from the fires. PFA is provided by the RC trained volunteers. Any interested person affected by the fires can ask questions and receive answers and tips for coping with the situation that threatens the well-being of the citizens. The open telephone lines are divided into regions and municipalities

Open PFA lines:

- Skopje Region - 071 / 367-909, 071 / 367-981 and 071 / 379-119
- Pelagonija Region - (Bitola, Demir Hisar, Krushevo, Prilep, Resen) 047 / 236-019 and 070 / 791-770
- Southwest and Polog Region - (Gostivar, Tetovo, Debar, Kicevo, Struga, Ohrid) 072 / 239-051 and 072 / 239-077
- East, Northeast and Southeast Region (Stip, Kocani, Berovo, Vinica, Delchevo, Probistip, Kratovo, Kumanovo, Kriva Palanka, Strumica, Gevgelija, Valandovo, Radovich) 071 / 426-660 and 071 / 426-633
- Vardar Region (Veles, Negotino, Sveti Nikole, Gradsko, Caska, Kavadarci, Lozovo, Rosoman, Demir Kapija) 075 / 294-036, 071 / 274-229 and 043/231537

Human Resources

Available Red Cross of RNM human resources (HQ and branches) on standby in accordance with the Plan for emergency response in case of fires

- Logistics/ Distribution/Assessment Team members – 431 persons
- First Aid Team members – 120 persons
- PFA Team members – 128 persons

Needs

The national society is in process of conducting detailed assessment in the field. Due to the current situation, the emerging needs for the days to come will be provision of humanitarian assistance for the affected population comprised of food and hygiene parcels, water, blankets and mattresses, and disinfectants.
