SOURCE 1

All About Wildfires

Climate change has led to more extreme weather in the last few decades, including droughts. Currently, most of the country is in the "most severe drought in recorded history." The hotter and drier the environment becomes due to rising temperatures, the higher the risk of wildfires starting from natural or human-related activity.

Intense heat and dry vegetation can quickly fuel a wildfire that can burn out of control. And when there's strong wind, it creates ideal conditions for fires to become widespread.

However, forest fires are sometimes welcome. Fires that are low intensity and occur naturally are necessary—and unavoidable. These fires are mainly caused by lightning that strikes trees or the ground.

Smaller fires can remove and reduce dead grass, brush, and trees that can fuel larger and more severe wildfires. Healthy fire also destroys smaller or weaker vegetation and sends their nutrients more quickly into the ground. As a result, the stronger trees and plants that stick around get more sunlight and nutrients to become even healthier, enabling their species to evolve.

With fewer plant roots taking up space on the forest floor, more water becomes available for other vegetation and wildlife.

All About Wildfires: Causes, Effects, and Educational Activities



Excerpt from Project Learning Tree website

SOURCE 2

Why certain naturally occurring wildfires are necessary



TedEd Video | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNVZEVq3KzY





5 Facts About Wildfires

FACT #1 — Humans cause nearly 85% of wildfires. While wildfires can start naturally from lightning strikes and spontaneous combustion of dry fuel, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that humans cause nearly 85% of wildfires in the United States. Examples of this activity include leaving campfires unattended, improperly disposing of cigarettes, knocking over powerlines, burning debris, and committing arson.

FACT #2 — Dry conditions increase the risk of wildfires. Wildfires thrive in dry climates and drought-ridden locations because these areas are full of flammable materials like dead plants and dry vegetation.

FACT #3 — Fire prevents fire. It may seem strange, but smaller fires can actually prevent bigger ones from occurring. This is because smaller, cooler fires can help to remove any potential fuel like dry leaves, logs, and overgrown shrubs.

FACT #4 — Wildfires can travel at a rate of up to 14.27 miles per hour Wildfires need fuel, heat, and oxygen to begin and stay alive, but they require strong winds to spread the flames and cause an inferno of destruction. Once the wildfire begins and spreads, it can travel at a rate of up to 6.7 miles per hour in forests and up to 14.27 miles per hour in grasslands. In 2017, the Thomas Fire in California spread so quickly that it moved at a rate equivalent to a football field per second.

FACT #5—Forest fires help the ecosystem. Small fires clear out overgrown areas and create open space for sunlight to shine down. This allows new plants to grow, providing valuable food and habitats for many wildlife species.