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BY CAITLIN O'KANE

DECEMBER 6, 2023 / 11:58 AM EST / CBS NEWS













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# Wildfire smoke threatens to undo improvements on air pollution, study finds

Nicole Karlis  
December 5, 2023 · 2 min read

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BY SHARON UDASIN - 12/04/23 6:40 PM ET

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# Wildfires Are Undoing Gains Made Against Air Pollution

By [HealthDay](#) | Dec. 5, 2023, at 8:37 a.m.

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By Dennis Thompson HealthDay Reporter

TUESDAY, Dec. 5, 2023 (HealthDay News) -- Unhealthy air from wildfires is causing hundreds of additional deaths in the western United States every year, a new study claims.

Wildfires have undercut progress made in cleaning America's air, and between 2000 and 2020 caused an increase of 670 premature deaths each year in the West, researchers report Dec. 4 in *The Lancet Planetary Health* journal.



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# Research shows that wildfires have erased two decades' worth of air quality gains in western United States

by University of Iowa

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Wildfires have erased two decades' worth of air quality gains in western United States

Study finds fire-prone areas and downwind regions have seen an increase of premature deaths

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You need only to remember last summer's wildfires in the United States and Canada, which fouled the air from coast to coast, to know the effects these blazes can have on the environment and human health.

A new study has tabulated the toll from two decades of wildfires on air quality and human health in the continental U.S. The authors report that from 2000 to 2020, the air has worsened in the western U.S., mainly due to the increase in frequency and



Media Contact

Richard Lewis  
University of Iowa  
[richard-c-lewis@uiowa.edu](mailto:richard-c-lewis@uiowa.edu)  
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More on this News Release

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8. **Axios.com:** [Study: Western U.S. wildfires undo 2 decades of air quality progress](#)

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## Study: Western U.S. wildfires undo 2 decades of air quality progress



Sareen Habeshian, Rebecca Falconer





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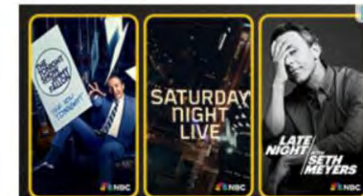
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Wildfires have offset 20 years of air quality gains in US West: study

Summary by Ground News

The frequency and ferocity of [wildfires](#) across the U.S. West have negated the improvements in air quality achieved over the past two decades, a new study has found.

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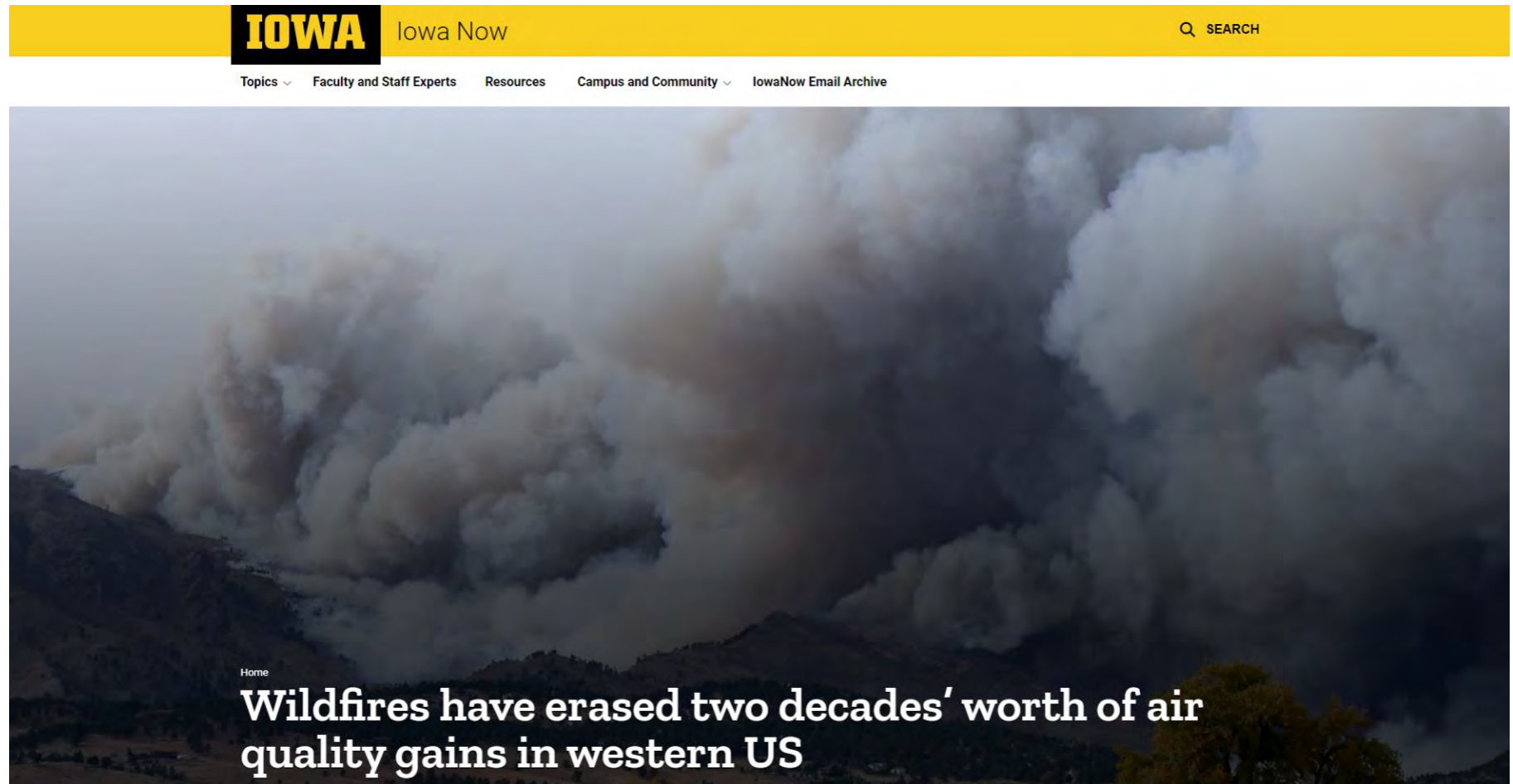
Researchers' Analysis Found Health Risks, Nearly 1,000 Premature Deaths Over Two Decades

By Cazzy Medley / Dec 06, 2023

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Study: Black carbon rates have been increasing by an average of 55%, leading to around 670 additional premature deaths annually

Posted Dec 5, 2023, 9:09 am

Hillel Aron  
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**Wildfires have erased two decades' worth of air quality gains in western United States**

*Study finds fire-prone areas and downwind regions have seen an increase of premature deaths*



2023-12-05 (Press-News.org)

You need only to remember last summer's wildfires in the United States and Canada, which fouled the air from coast to coast, to know the effects these blazes can have on the environment and human health.

A new study has tabulated the toll from two decades of wildfires on air quality and human health in the continental U.S. The authors report that from 2000 to 2020, the air has worsened in the western U.S., mainly due to the increase in frequency and ferocity of wildfires causing an increase of 670 premature deaths per year in the region during that time period. Overall, the study's authors report fires have undercut successful federal efforts to improve air quality primarily through reductions in automobile emissions.

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15. Earth.com: [Twenty years of air quality improvement erased by wildfires](#)



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By **Eric Ralls**  
Earth.com staff writer


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A comprehensive study spanning two decades (2000-2020) has revealed a concerning increase in air pollution in the western U.S., primarily due to the growing intensity and frequency of [wildfires](#). This trend has resulted in an estimated 670 additional premature deaths annually in the region.

The researchers emphasize that these wildfires have negated the progress made through federal air quality improvement initiatives, largely driven by reductions in automobile emissions. [Jun Wang](#), the lead corresponding author and a professor at the [University of Iowa](#), expressed deep concern about the situation.

"Our air is supposed to be getting cleaner, mainly due to EPA regulations on emissions. However, the fires have limited or erased these air-quality gains," he stated.



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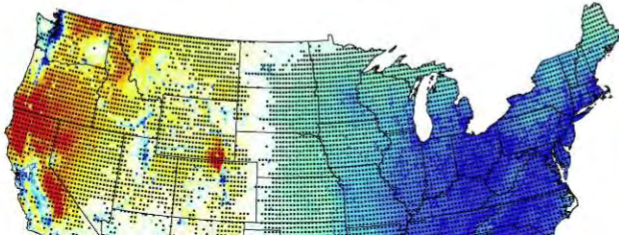
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Paul Day  
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# Wildfires wipe out 20 years of air quality improvements in western USA

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While this year's wildfires in Canada and the USA had an impact around the world, wildfires – albeit on a smaller scale – have been having a local impact for years and a new study has examined their long term effects for the first time.

The researchers from the University of Iowa calculated black carbon concentrations from satellite data and 500 ground-based monitoring stations



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A new study has tabulated the toll from two decades of wildfires on air quality and human health in the continental U.S. The authors report that from 2000 to 2020, the air has worsened in the western U.S., mainly due to the increase in frequency and ferocity of wildfires causing an increase of

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By Dennis Thompson, HealthDay News



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Courthouse News | Published: December 5, 2023

(Martin Kidston/Missoula Current file)





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## Wildfire smoke threatens to undo improvements on air pollution, study finds

EPA regulations were supposed to improve air quality, but fires have limited or erased these gains, experts say

By **NICOLE KARLIS**  
Senior Writer

PUBLISHED DECEMBER 5, 2023 11:00AM (EST)



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### Western megafires erase 2 decades of air quality progress

📅 Dec 5, 2023

☰ Issue: Climate Change

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**A new study finds that megafires in the Western U.S. are causing premature deaths and have undermined improvements in air quality from reduced vehicle emissions.** The study, published in *The Lancet Planetary Health*, found that air quality worsened in the West from 2000 to 2020, with concentrations of black carbon rising 55 percent. The authors estimate that fires have caused an additional 670 premature deaths each year.

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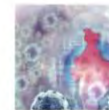


By: **Bijay Laxmi** Published: December 5, 2023 at 11:09 pm EST | Updated: Dec 5, 2023 at 12:59 am EST



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[HILLEL ARON](#) / December 4, 2023







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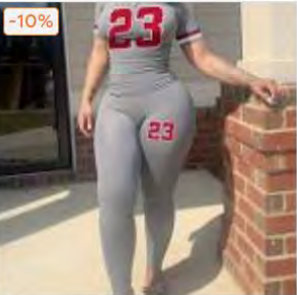
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# Wildfires Have Erased Two Decades' Worth of Air Quality Gains in U.S., Study Finds

 By: [Cristen Hemingway Jaynes](#) | Published: December 5, 2023 |  Edited by [Chris McDermott](#)



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**Western US Wildfires Undo Two Decades of Air Quality Progress** (axios.com)

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 Posted by **BeauHD** on Tuesday December 05, 2023 @10:30PM from the reversing-the-progress dept.

An anonymous reader quotes a report from Axios:

Increasingly intensive and frequent wildfires in the western U.S. are deteriorating air quality and causing more premature deaths, a new study found. Fires have damaged federal efforts from the Environmental Protection Agency to improve air quality mainly through reductions in automobile emissions, per the study published Monday in The Lancet Planetary Health. From 2000 to 2020, air quality has worsened in the western U.S. due to wildfires. Black carbon concentrations have risen 55% on an annual basis, mostly due to the wildfires, researchers found. The fires have also caused an increase of 670 premature deaths per year in the region in the two-decade span. Meanwhile, the eastern U.S. had no major declines in air quality during the same time period.

Our air is supposed to be cleaner and cleaner due mostly to EPA regulations on emissions, but the fires have limited or erased these air-quality gains," said Jun Wang, the study's lead corresponding author and chair of the University of Iowa's Department of Chemical and Biochemical Engineering, in a statement. "[A]ll the efforts for the past 20 years by the EPA to make our air cleaner basically have been lost in fire-prone areas and downwind regions," Wang added. "We are losing ground."

[Daniel Swain, a climate scientist at UCLA] said the findings were consistent with other studies that contribute to the same overall picture that after the air quality regulations' great success, "the extremes of those air pollution episodes are actually now increasing again" due to wildfires. "On average, the air quality is still better, but the problem is, it's during these episodes of just-near apocalyptic conditions where we're really losing a lot of ground and that really is because the size and the intensity of wildfires has increased greatly," he said. Given climate change is a wildfire driver, keeping global heating to the lowest level possible will help. "But we're still going to see more warming no matter what moving forward, and so



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## Wildfires Are Undoing Gains Made Against Air Pollution

Posted on December 5, 2023 by Lady Clever | [Leave a reply](#)

Unhealthy air from wildfires is causing hundreds of additional deaths in the western United States every year, a new study claims.

Wildfires have undercut progress made in cleaning America's air, and between 2000 and 2020 caused an increase of 670 premature deaths each year in the West, researchers report Dec. 4 in *The Lancet Planetary Health* journal.

"Our air is supposed to be cleaner and cleaner, due mostly to EPA regulations on emissions, but the fires have limited or erased these air-quality gains," said lead researcher Jun Wang, chair of chemical and biochemical engineering at the University of Iowa.

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Wildfires have erased two decades' worth of air quality gains in western United States

Study finds fire-prone areas and downwind regions have seen an increase of premature deaths

Date: December 4, 2023

Source: University of Iowa

Summary: A new study concludes that wildfires originating in the western United States and Canada have erased air quality gains over the past two decades and caused an increase of premature deaths in fire-prone areas and downwind regions, primarily in the western U.S.

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by Cazzy Medley, University of Maryland



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## Western US Wildfires Undo Two Decades of Air Quality Progress

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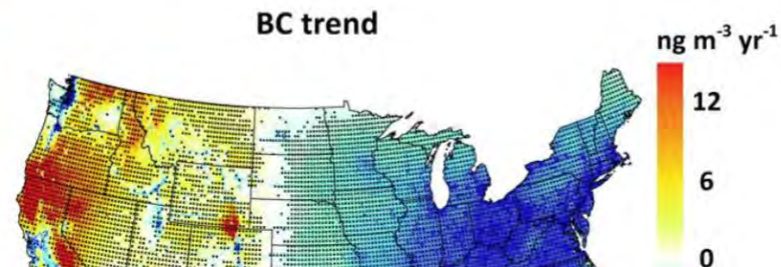
## Wildfires have erased two decades' worth of air quality gains in western United States

December 5, 2023 in Medicine & Health

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You need only to remember last summer's wildfires in the United States and Canada, which fouled the air from coast to coast, to know the effects these blazes can have on the environment and human health.



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TUESDAY, Dec. 5, 2023 (HealthDay News) — Unhealthy air from wildfires is causing hundreds of additional deaths in the western United States every year, a new study claims.


Wildfires have undercut progress made in cleaning America's air, and between 2000 and 2020 caused an increase of 670 premature deaths each year in the West, researchers report Dec. 4 in *The Lancet Planetary Health* journal.

"Our air is supposed to be cleaner and cleaner, due mostly to EPA regulations on emissions, but the fires have limited or erased these air-quality gains," said lead researcher Jun Wang, chair of chemical and biochemical engineering at the University of Iowa.


"In other words, all the efforts for the past 20 years by the EPA to make our air cleaner basically have been lost in fire-prone areas and downwind regions," Wang added in a university news release. "We are losing ground."



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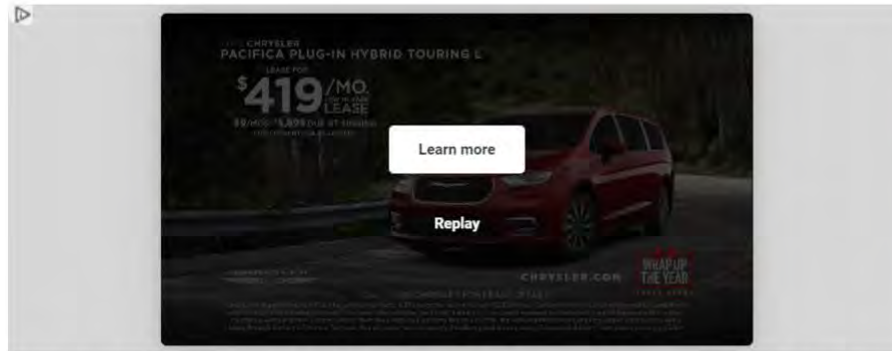
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## Western United States' Air Quality Gains Of Two Decades Erased By Wildfires

By Andrew Shawn — On Dec 6, 2023



0



You only need to recall last summer's wildfires in the United States and Canada to understand the impact these blazes can have on the environment and human health.

A recent study has quantified the effects of wildfires over the past two decades on air quality and human health in the contiguous U.S. According to the authors, air quality has deteriorated in the western U.S. from 2000 to 2020, primarily due to the increased frequency and severity of wildfires, resulting in an annual increase of 670 premature deaths in the region. The study's authors note that fires have undermined successful federal initiatives to improve air quality, particularly through reductions in vehicle emissions.

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## The Rising Number of Wildfires in the U.S. Is Worsening Air Quality and Affecting Human Health: New Study Reveals

By **Medriva** 3 min read Published Dec 6, 2023 at 12:59 pm EST | Updated Dec 6, 2023 at 12:59 pm EST

Wildfires have been a longstanding issue in the Western United States, but new research suggests that their impact is far more significant than previously believed. A study led by researchers from the University of Maryland, recently published in *The Lancet Planetary Health*, highlights the alarming relationship between wildfires, air pollution, and public health. The findings indicate that the surge in widespread wildfires in the U.S. is leading to changes in air quality, particularly in the Western U.S., and impacting human health due to the heightened toxicity of black carbon emissions.

### Understanding the Impact of Wildfires on Air Quality

The study takes a deep dive into the effects of wildfires by using deep learning and aerosol measurements to assess changes in mortality burden attributed to fine particle pollution, especially black carbon, from 2000 to 2020. Despite national efforts to reduce human-caused emissions and legislation such as the U.S. Clean Air Act, the researchers found that the increasing wildfires have significantly undermined the reductions in fine particulate matter (PM) achieved by the Clean Air Act.

Although PM and black carbon concentrations decreased nationally, the decline in fine particles and premature deaths reversed in the western U.S. since 2010. This change has resulted in an estimated 670 excess deaths annually, emphasizing the critical need for effective policies to reduce fire risk, mitigate climate warming, and manage wildfires to improve air quality and public health.





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Health - December 6, 2023

## Western wildfires reversed decades of gains from air pollution-fighting measures: Study

### WESTERN WILDFIRES REVERSE DECADES OF AIR POLLUTION-FIGHTING MEASURES: STUDY



A recent study has revealed that the devastating wildfires in the western regions of the United States have reversed decades of progress made in combating air pollution. The study, conducted by a team of researchers, highlights the alarming impact of these wildfires on air quality and the environment.

Over the past few years, the western states have experienced an increase in the frequency and intensity of wildfires, largely due to climate change and other factors. These wildfires not only pose a direct threat to human lives and property but also have far-reaching consequences on air quality.

The study found that the smoke and pollutants released during these wildfires have significantly contributed to the deterioration of air quality in the affected regions. The fine particulate matter (PM2.5) and other harmful pollutants released during the fires have been linked to various respiratory and cardiovascular health issues.

Furthermore, the researchers discovered that the progress made in reducing air pollution through various measures, such as stricter emission standards and cleaner energy sources, has been negated by the impact of these wildfires. The study estimates that the air pollution levels caused by the wildfires have reversed the

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TUESDAY, Dec. 5, 2023 (HealthDay News) — Unhealthy air from wildfires is causing hundreds of additional deaths in the western United States every year, a new study claims.

Wildfires have undercut progress made in cleaning America's air, and between 2000 and 2020 caused an increase of 670 premature deaths each year in the West, researchers report Dec. 4 in *The Lancet Planetary Health* journal.

"Our air is supposed to be cleaner and cleaner, due mostly to EPA regulations on emissions, but the fires have limited or erased these air-quality gains," said lead researcher [Jun Wang](#), chair of chemical and biochemical engineering at the University of Iowa.

"In other words, all the efforts for the past 20 years by the EPA to make our air cleaner basically have been lost in fire-prone areas and downwind regions," Wang added in a university news release. "We are losing ground."

For this study, researchers calculated the concentration of airborne black carbon, a fine-particle air pollutant linked to respiratory and heart disease, across the continental United States.

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# US Wildfires Undo Air Quality Progress Of Last 20 Years

unbranded - Newsworthy Dec 6, 2023 Updated Dec 6, 2023




A new study reveals that the increasingly intense and frequent wildfires in the western US have contributed to a deterioration in air quality. The study, published in The Lancet Planetary Health, highlights that air quality in the western US worsened from 2000 to 2020 due to wildfires. Black carbon concentrations rose by 55% annually during this period, primarily attributed to wildfires. The impact of these fires increased from 670 premature deaths per year in the region, it also undid two decades of progress in air quality. The study underscores the challenge posed by wildfires to federal efforts aimed at improving air quality. The findings also emphasize the need for strategies to address the growing risk of wildfires, intensified by climate change. "We are worried that climate change will undermine and potentially reverse the progress that public health has made in this and other areas and are concerned to be seeing this happening now, as we can expect the climate to warm considerably more in the next several decades", said Professor Jeremy Hess, University of Washington.

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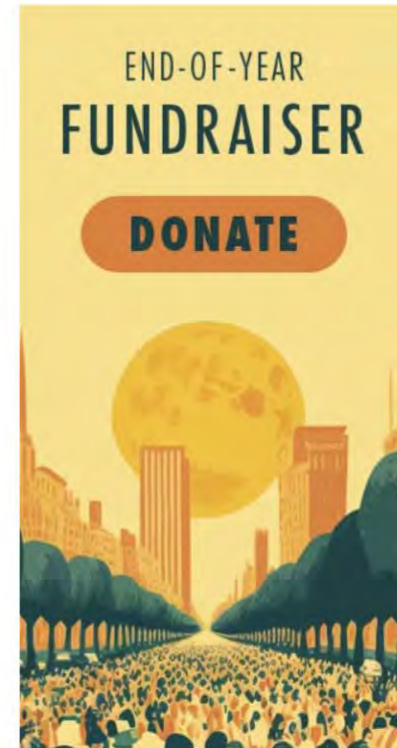
*Rising wildfire smoke nullifies decades of air quality gains.*

By **Alexandra Jacobo** - December 7, 2023

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By UNIVERSITY OF IOWA DECEMBER 7, 2023



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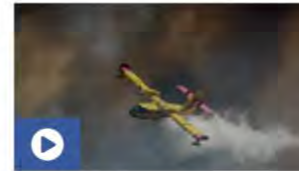
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## US Wildfires Undo Air Quality Progress Of Last 20 Years

unbranded - Newsworthy | Dec 7, 2023

A new study reveals that the increasingly intense and frequent wildfires in the western US have contributed to a deterioration in air quality.







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## Worsening Wildfires Are Undoing Air Quality Progress In The US

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By David Morgan — On Dec 5, 2023


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Nicole Karlis  
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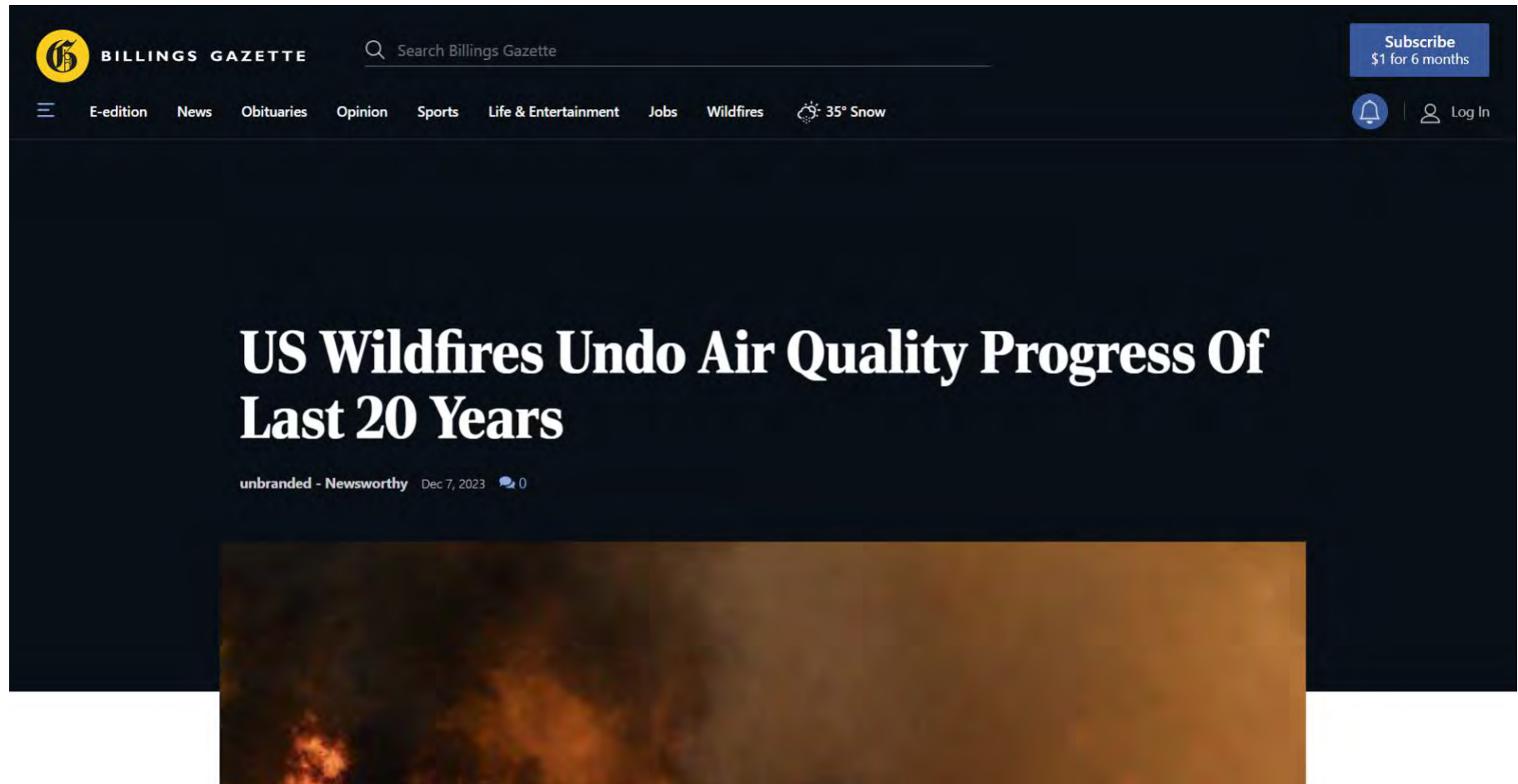
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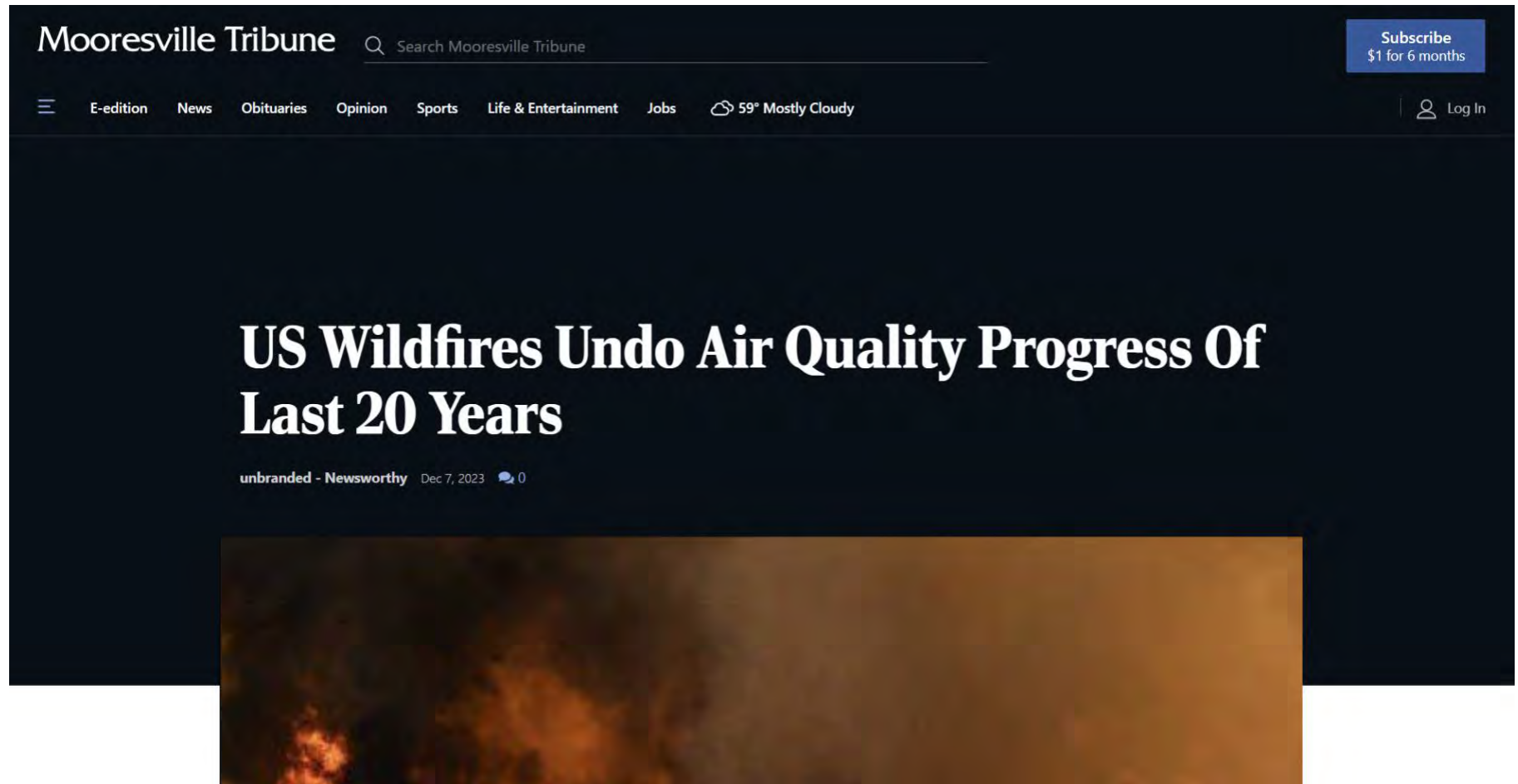


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BY [WILLIAM ADAMS](#) | THU, 07 DEC 2023 AT 09:23:03 |

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The Western United States' air quality had been on good footing for 20 years until wildfires caused it to falter



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The western U.S. has been plagued by wildfires for more than two decades, leading to elevated health risks and negligible attempts to reduce pollution, with an additional 670 premature deaths a year, according to a conservative estimate.

Early deaths have increased in areas with a high fire risk and a tendency to go downwind, as per a study.

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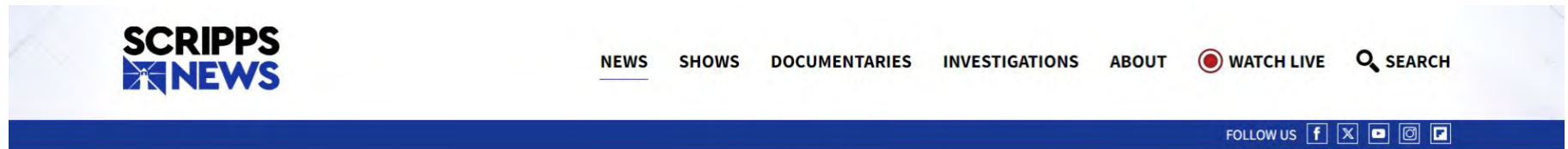
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A new study highlights the need to come up with plans to deal with the growing danger of wildfires, made worse by climate change.



71. Scripps News: [Wildfires in US have reversed 2 decades of progress in air quality](#)





Climate Change

## Wildfires in US have reversed 2 decades of progress in air quality

A new study highlights the need to come up with plans to deal with the growing danger of wildfires, made worse by climate change.



72. America Online: [Wildfires have offset 20 years of air quality gains in US West: study](#)

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## Wildfires have offset 20 years of air quality gains in US West: study

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## (해외환경뉴스) 산불로 인해, 미국 서부 지역에서 20년 동안 개선된 대기 질이 사라졌다.

 이상현 객원기자

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UNIVERSITY OF IOWA 해당 기간 동안 이 지역에서는 산불로 인해 연간 670명의 조기 사망 증가

본 기사는 ENN이 전하는 최신 환경뉴스입니다. 앞으로 본지는 ENN은 물론 전세계 환경전문 언론에서 전하는 세계 환경문제도 함께 전달, 보도할 예정입니다. (편집자주)

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