



**Report by the Department of Forests on the  
wildfire that broke out in Malia on Wednesday,  
23 July 2025**

**30 July 2025**

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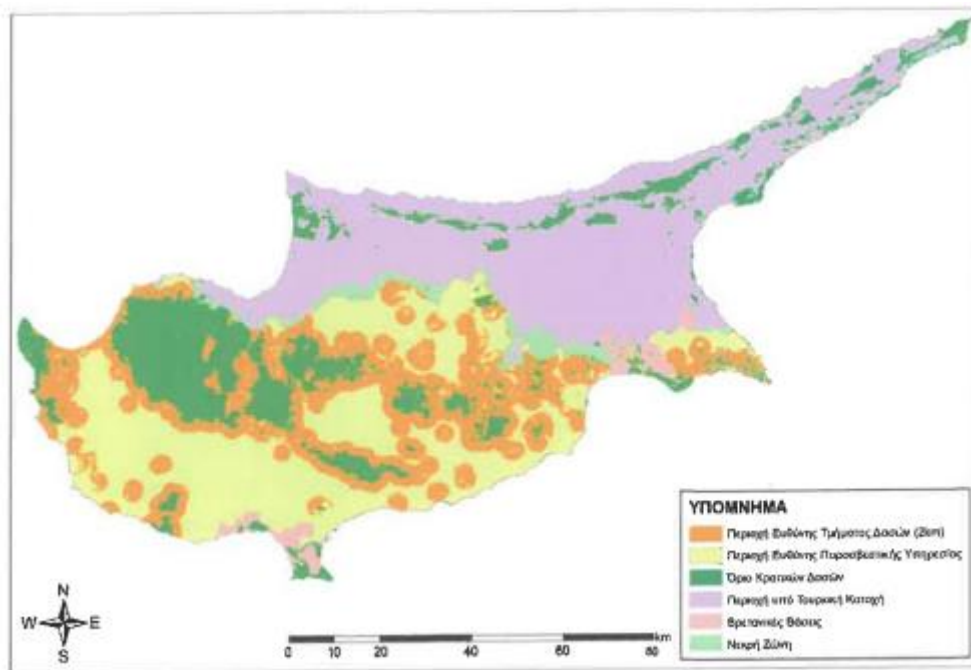
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## 1. Introduction

The Department of Forests is the competent authority for the fire protection in state forests as well as in the 2-kilometre zone surrounding their designated boundaries. Within its jurisdiction, the Department implements a comprehensive forest fire management system comprising of prevention, preparedness, and suppression measures. A concise overview of the system is provided in the following table. The forest fire management system is subject to continuous improvement. Following the conclusion of each fire season, preparatory measures are initiated to ensure optimal readiness for the upcoming season.

No.	Sector	Initiatives undertaken by the Department of Forests
1	Prevention	Enforcement of Forest Legislation Conducting awareness campaigns Construction and maintenance of firebreak infrastructure Silvicultural measures – Vegetation management Operation of picnic and camping sites
2	Preparedness	Comprehensive Readiness System: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Implementation of standby duty programmes for Readiness Coordinators;</li><li>• Implementation of standby duty programmes for Aircraft Control Officers;</li><li>• Implementation of standby duty programmes for forest officers stationed at 25 Forest Stations;</li><li>• Implementation of standby duty programmes for the Forest Firefighting Task Force;</li></ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operation of the General Operations Centre;</li> <li>• Operation of the Mobile Operations Centre;</li> <li>• Participation in the readiness programme of the Operations Office of the National Guard's Aerial Firefighting Unit; and</li> <li>• Staffing of the National Operational-Crisis Management Centre "ZENON".</li> </ul> <p>Comprehensive Wildfire Early Detection System:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staffing of 15 fire lookout stations and 32 observation posts;</li> <li>• Conducting mobile ground patrols;</li> <li>• Conducting aerial patrols using loaded firefighting aircraft;</li> <li>• Utilisation of technology (drones, sensors, etc.); and</li> <li>• Operation of the wildfire reporting hotline 1407.</li> </ul>
3	Suppression	<p>Operation of the Forest Firefighting Task Force</p> <p>Operation of Operations Centres</p> <p>Procurement, maintenance, and use of firefighting vehicles and other machinery</p> <p>Procurement and use of firefighting equipment, fire suppression materials, personal protective equipment, and telecommunications equipment</p> <p>Implementation of operational wildfire suppression plans</p>



Jurisdictional areas for forest fire suppression

The Department of Forests is the competent authority for the fire protection in state forests as well as in the 2-kilometre zone surrounding their designated boundaries. Within its jurisdiction, the Department implements a comprehensive forest fire management system comprising of prevention, preparedness, and suppression measures. The forest fire management system is subject to continuous improvement. Following the conclusion of each fire season, preparatory measures are initiated to ensure optimal readiness for the upcoming season. With regard to the 2025 fire season, the following actions were undertaken:

## 1. ORGANISATION – PLANNING

### 1.1 Human Resource Development

By decision of the Council of Ministers, 108 new forest firefighters, fire lookouts, and specialised vehicle operators were recruited in 2024. Currently, 275 forest officers, 625 forest firefighters, 80 fire lookouts, and 28 machinery operators form the first line of defence in protecting the forests from wildfires. To the same end, the fire suppression season was extended from six to ten months. This

represents a significant investment in human resources, marking the largest workforce in the history of the Department of Forests.

## 1.2 Coordination, Organisation, and Planning

Following the conclusion of the previous fire season, coordination commenced among the agencies involved in fire protection in preparation for the current fire season. Meetings were held at various levels: a high-level meeting chaired by the President of the Republic of Cyprus; a series of meetings of the Interministerial Group; monthly meetings of the Permanent Interdepartmental Fire Committee; as well as meetings involving relevant services and agencies, including those held at the local level.

## 1.3 Management of Wildland Fires

In February 2025, a specialised study was completed by an expert on the redesign of the wildland fire management system, focusing on its three key pillars: prevention, preparedness, and suppression. The proposal outlines a unified and integrated Management System for Agricultural and Forest Fires, modelled on the system currently implemented by the Department of Forests for state forests, with the primary objective of reducing response time to 10 minutes.

The study was presented in March 2025 to the Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment, the Minister of Justice and Public Order, and other competent authorities. Following this, the Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment instructed the Department of Forests to prepare a roadmap for the implementation of the study's recommendations.

## 1.4 Reopening of the Forestry College

By Government decision, the Cyprus Forestry College will reopen after nearly ten years of suspension. For the current year, 20 positions for Forestry Apprentices have been advertised for enrolment, starting this coming September, in the “Higher Diploma in Forestry” programme.

## 1.5. Internal Audits

With the aim of continuous improvement and ensuring a high level of readiness of both personnel and services provided by the Department of Forests, internal audits commenced this year at all Forest Stations. These audits are intended to confirm the service's state of preparedness.

## 2. FOREST FIRE PREVENTION

### 2.1 Legislation on fire outbreaks

A significant step in strengthening fire prevention was the enactment of six amended bills by the House of Representatives in February 2025. The amendment of the Forest Law forms part of this package of legislation. These amendments revise and modernise the legal framework, introducing new offences, providing a comprehensive classification of offences, and harmonising penalties across various laws. The strengthened legislation, with penalties reaching up to 12 years' imprisonment and fines of up to €100,000, sends a clear message of zero tolerance.

### 2.2 Construction and Maintenance of Firebreak Infrastructure

A key preventive preparedness measure ensuring rapid access and response by firefighting forces is the maintenance of firebreak infrastructure within state forests. By the end of May, maintenance works had been completed on approximately 3,645 kilometres of forest road network, 1,010 kilometres of firebreaks, 227 water tanks and 227 hydrants, 38 helipads, and 16 fire safety systems.

### 2.3 Awareness Campaign

Forest Protection Week was held from 5 to 11 May 2025. Through lectures delivered at ten schools, twelve military camps and organised groups, as well as the distribution of information material, the Department of Forests aims to cultivate a daily relationship of trust and responsibility with society. At the same time, during the summer period, a public awareness campaign is being conducted via mass media and social media platforms. This campaign is conducted in collaboration between the Department of Forests, the Ministry of Interior, the Press and Information Office, and the Fire Service.

At the same time, three visits were carried out in the complexes of forested areas by the Director of the Department of Forests and the Commissioner for the Development of Mountain Communities. These visits focused on fire prevention and included a series of lectures and public information sessions aimed at households and communities:

- 9/9/24, in Korakou, regarding the creation of green firebreaks. Present were representatives of agricultural organisations, community leaders from the Solea area, and members of the public.
- 23/12/2024, with 14 communities from Complex Z, Lemesos District
- 22/1/2025, with 11 communities from Complex H, Lemesos District
- 19/2/2024, with 10 communities from Complex A, Lemesos District, with 12 communities from Complex B, Lemesos District, with 6 communities from Complex D, Larnaka District. In attendance were also the Presidents of the Community Councils of Parekklesia, Asgata, Vasa Koilaniou, and Monagroulli.
- 11/7/25, in Pyrga, with the Community Council, political and environmental organisations, hunting associations, members of the public, and others.

In addition, a number of private meetings have been held between the Director of the Department of Forests, the Commissioner for the Development of Mountain Communities, and the Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment with individual communities and complexes of communities. The purpose of these meetings has been to provide information and to address, in practical terms, issues related to fire protection and the prevention of the spread of wildfires.

## 2.4 Vegetation Management

The uncontrolled growth and spread of vegetation is a key factor in the propagation of wildfires. In addition to silvicultural interventions carried out by the Department of Forests – involving the selective removal of vegetation within forested areas as a preventive measure against the spread of forest fires – we are also strategically strengthening interventions in key zones and forested areas. These efforts aim to reduce combustible material in a timely manner,



before it becomes a threat. In March 2025, the method of controlled burning was implemented for the first time in Cyprus – an internationally recognised practice already applied in many countries.

Another preventive measure is controlled grazing. A traditional method adapted to current needs, aimed at reducing combustible material in forest-adjacent communities or high-risk areas. In 2025, the Department of Forests, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, initiated the implementation of controlled grazing in the Pyrgos Tillirias area. In 2026, two additional areas will follow, each with distinct characteristics in terms of land cover, fuel load, and wildfire spread risk.

Promotion of measures to reduce biomass: Another essential preventive intervention aimed at reducing combustible material is the measure providing 100% funding for the purchase of pruning shredders by Communities and Municipalities identified as having an elevated wildfire risk. The total budget for this initiative amounts to €500,000. A total of 17 applications for the purchase of shredders were submitted and approved in March 2025, enabling timely preparation by local authorities and ensuring that the equipment can be utilised effectively prior to the start of the summer season.

Clearing of abandoned agricultural land: As an additional preventive measure, and in coordination with the Ministry of Interior, the obligation to clear agricultural land located in high-risk areas and which has been abandoned, has now been institutionalised. This is provided for under Article 82 of the Communities Law, and aligns with the legal framework already in place for the clearance of plots in municipal areas. The objective is to reduce the risk of wildfire spread. Letters have already been sent to the Union of Municipalities and the Union of Communities, requesting them to take the necessary actions. Specifically, as of January 2025, the Department of Forests sent letters to communities urging the commencement of clearance works to remove dry grass. In February and March 2025, communities were also informed – via letters issued through the Union of Communities and the Office for the Development of Mountain Communities – about the legislative amendment supporting this requirement.

With the aim of protecting communities such as Moniatis, as well as safeguarding the Troodos Forest, thinning operations of pinus brutia were carried out between 26 and 30 May 2025. This specific measure will continue and is planned to cover all Troodos communities in the forest's periphery by the end of the current fire prevention season.

## 2.5 Strategic Plan of the Common Agricultural Policy 2023–2027

Forest protection is incorporated within the strategic framework of the Common Agricultural Policy, with specific interventions co-funded by the Republic of Cyprus and the European Union. Projects from the latest 2024 call are already being implemented, while the next call is expected by October 2025. The total budget allocated for this intervention during the implementation period is estimated at €3,045,000. Eligible expenditures include the maintenance of firebreak infrastructure, installation of fire safety systems, construction of fire lookout stations, silvicultural measures, water tanks, installation and maintenance of observation points, cultivation of fields, among others. The beneficiaries of this funding include the Department of Forests, monastic authorities, private individuals, and communities.

## 2.6 Action plan of the Electricity Authority of Cyprus for conductor replacement

To reduce the risk of wildfires originating from critical infrastructure such as overhead power lines, coordinated and targeted interventions have been implemented. At the initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment, an interdepartmental working group was established, which meets regularly with representatives from the Electricity Authority of Cyprus (EAC), the Department of Forests, the Fire Service, and the Game and Fauna Service. The EAC is currently implementing an extensive action plan that includes the undergrounding of electricity transmission cables in sensitive areas, the replacement of bare conductors with covered conductors in various locations within high-risk zones, and the pruning of trees near power lines. To date, 12.8 kilometres of conductor replacement has been completed, representing 56% of the total work planned for this phase.

### 3. DETECTION AND REPORTING OF FOREST FIRES

#### 3.1 Operation of fire lookout stations and observation posts

For the purposes of fire detection, 15 fire lookout stations and 32 observation posts are operational, staffed by specialised personnel and equipped with firefighting vehicles for immediate response in the event of a fire. Due to an increase in staffing, each fire lookout is now staffed by two personnel, compared to one in previous years.

#### 3.2 Ground and Aerial Patrols

Ground patrols are conducted using small rapid-response firefighting vehicles by personnel from the Department of Forests, the Civil Defence, the Game and Fauna Service, the National Guard, and the Police. Aerial patrols are also carried out using water-equipped firefighting aircraft and drones, with patrol hours increasing and intensifying year on year. Notably, in 2025, 1,000 hours of aerial patrols are expected to be conducted, compared to 650 hours in 2024 and 100 hours in 2021. Thanks to these patrols, many fires have been detected in their initial stages.

#### 3.3 Use of electro-optical fire detection systems

Over the past two years, three electro-optical fire detection systems have been installed in selected forest areas, significantly enhancing the early detection of wildfires. These systems are capable of detecting heat sources, and they are operated by Forest Officers from the “Zenon” Coordination Centre facilities in Larnaka.

#### 3.4 Forest fire reporting hotline

The 1407 hotline serves as a key tool for the prompt reporting of forest fires by members of the public. It is a fact that many fires have been contained thanks to the timely alerts received through this line. For this reason, we continue to invest in strengthening early warning and reporting mechanisms. Currently, the establishment and implementation of a unified emergency call management system (112) is underway. This system will enable the immediate warning of citizens and improve the coordination of all relevant emergency Services.

## 4. PREPAREDNESS AND FIRE SUPPRESSION MEASURES

### 4.1 Implementation of standby duty programmes

The operational mechanism of the Department of Forests is fully deployed and at a high state of preparedness. From 1 April, standby duty programmes have been in effect, involving 275 Forest Officers, 625 Forest Firefighters, and 80 fire lookouts. A total of 25 Forest Stations across Cyprus and 3 Support Units are staffed, along with 15 fire lookout stations and 32 observation posts for fire detection. In addition, Forest Officers are assigned to the Department's General Operations Centre, the Mobile Operations Centre, the “Zenon” Coordination Centre, and the Operations Office of the Aerial Firefighting Unit.

### 4.2 Training / Preparedness Exercises

The training programmes for all personnel were completed in February–March, based on the implementation of the new training system. This includes both theoretical and practical instruction on fire suppression methods, safety, fire ecology, equipment use, and other key areas. As is the case every fire season, refresher training sessions for wildfire response teams are held every Thursday and Friday. On 16 May, the preparedness and response exercise “PYRSOS 2025” was carried out under the coordination of the Fire Service, with the participation of all agencies and stakeholders involved in wildfire prevention and response.

In 2025, a total of 265 individuals were trained at the Forestry College, including citizens, Game and Fauna Service personnel, and newly recruited officers of the Department of Forests. This represents the highest number of trainees prior to a fire season, compared to previous years (2020 – 72 trainees; 2021 – 245 trainees; 2022 – 72 trainees; 2023 – 47 trainees; 2024 – 168 trainees).

### 4.3 Ground-based firefighting resources

Over the past two years, ground-based firefighting resources have been significantly strengthened through the implementation of one of the largest equipment programmes ever undertaken by the Department of Forests, under the Recovery and Resilience Plan. Among other additions, a total of 25 new all-terrain firefighting vehicles with a 2-tonne water capacity have been delivered,

while 17 additional large vehicles with a 6-tonne capacity are expected to be delivered during 2026. The fleet has also been expanded with 75 personnel carrier vehicles; 8 bulldozers; 4 excavators; 9 agricultural tractors; and 6 branch shredders. Procurement procedures are also underway for 6 water tankers (12 tonnes) and 6 transport platforms. In addition, 10 rapid response vehicles are expected to be delivered before the end of the year. As of today, the Department of Forests has a total of 108 firefighting vehicles, marking the largest fleet it has ever operated.

#### 4.4 Aerial firefighting resources

Another Government commitment that has been realised is the integration of the Department of Forests' Aerial Unit into the National Guard as of April 2025. For this year's fire season, 11 primary aerial resources have been secured. Additionally, three helicopters from the National Guard and the Police are available as secondary firefighting resources, as well as for supporting the coordination of aerial operations. At the same time, planning is underway for the acquisition of ten proprietary aerial vehicles within the next five years. On 29 July 2025, the tender for the purchase of three firefighting aircraft through a purchase leasing scheme was successfully completed. The tender also includes an option to purchase a further five aircraft. The aircrafts have already arrived in Cyprus and are scheduled to become operational from 1 August 2025.

#### 4.5 International cooperation and mutual assistance in firefighting

The Republic of Cyprus has applied for and received approval to include two aircraft in the European rescEU transition Mechanism for the period June–October 2025. Two firefighting aircraft from Jordan have already been operating in Cyprus since last March, actively supporting operations as they did last year. Similarly, helicopters from the British Sovereign Base Areas also participate in the firefighting efforts. Additionally, work is underway to establish a firefighting ground unit, with its registration in the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism in progress. Certification of the team and registration under the Civil Protection Mechanism, under the responsibility of the Department of Forests, is expected within 2026. At the same time, cooperation with the United States

Forest Service in the field of wildfire management is opening new horizons for knowledge exchange. Last October, a delegation from the Department of Forests participated in a training mission in the USA on Wildfire Management, and the Operation and Management of National Forest Parks.

## 5. IMPLEMENTATION OF PLANNING FOR THE INTRODUCTION AND USE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES

The Department of Forests is already implementing the TETRA system for immediate and secure communication, while actively participating in the planning of upcoming phases that foresee new technological infrastructures in collaboration with the Fire Service and the National Guard. The goal is faster detection, better coordination, and more effective intervention through the implementation of the next phases of the comprehensive system.

## 2. Wildfire assessment for the period January–July 2025 in the Department of Forests' area of responsibility

From the beginning of the year until July, 119 wildfires occurred within the Department of Forests' area of responsibility, with a total burned area of 26 hectares. Comparing these figures with those of the decade 2015–2024, the number of wildfires in the Department's area is 16% higher than the average (103 wildfires), while the burned area is 94% lower than the average (452 hectares). This confirms that the Department of Forests during the 2025 fire season is operating at its highest staffing levels and operational preparedness ever.

## 3. Coordination of fire suppression operations

The Chief, meaning the person responsible for fire suppression, is **always ONE**. This person is designated according to relevant legislation and decisions of the Council of Ministers. For state forests and the 2 km perimeter zone around them, the Chief is the Director of the Department of Forests, while for

the rest of the rural areas as well as urban areas, it is the Fire Service Chief Fire Officer.

The responsibility for the coordination of operations, and consequently the coordination of all participating services, lies solely with the Chief/Officer in charge of the incident. This is also ensured by the relevant operational Plans, which clearly define the role of each Service.

For major wildfires that escalate into crises occurring within the jurisdiction of the Department of Forests (forest fires), the Special National Plan “HEPHAESTUS” is applied, while for fires within the jurisdiction of the Fire Service (rural fires), the Special National Plan “PYRSOS” is implemented. The “IKAROS” Plan, which pertains to the safe and effective management of aerial firefighting resources, is activated as required by the incident officer at the time.

The entire planning and coordination process is supported and overseen by the six-member Ministerial Crisis Management Team, chaired by the respective Minister whose department holds responsibility for the operational coordination of the incident.

#### **4. Meteorological conditions in the Malia area on 23/07/2025**

The meteorological conditions prevailing at the time of the fire outbreak, according to data recorded by the nearest meteorological station located in Malia, were as follows:

- Air temperature: 40°C
- Relative humidity: 20%
- Wind speed: 5–6 Beaufort, with gusts of 7–8 Beaufort

The aforementioned meteorological conditions favour the ignition and, more importantly, the rapid spread of a wildfire. Furthermore, they render firefighting efforts extremely demanding both physically and mentally for firefighters and forest firefighters. In addition to the high temperatures and strong winds, the very low relative humidity was also a particularly significant factor. It is well established that the lower the relative humidity, the easier the ignition of a fire

becomes, as well as the emergence of new fire hotspots from embers, which in turn greatly accelerates the fire's progression.

With relative humidity conditions at 20%, considered an indicative threshold of extreme conditions, the level of difficulty in combating wildfires becomes exceptionally high.

A noteworthy factor that complicated the firefighting efforts was that during the first night, the average wind speed, according to data from the meteorological station in Malia, was 3–4 Beaufort, with isolated gusts reaching 5–6 Beaufort. From 3 a.m. the following day, i.e., on 24 July 2025, the wind speed decreased to 1–2 Beaufort, however isolated gusts of 3–4 Beaufort persisted.

## **5. Preparedness level of the Department of Forests in its jurisdiction on 23/07/2025**

Based on the weather forecasts issued by the Department of Meteorology on 22/07/2025 concerning the following day, namely 23/07/2025, the Department of Forests had issued a Red Alert, representing the highest level of risk for the outbreak and spread of wildfires.

On Red Alert days, the Department of Forests operates at the highest state of readiness to respond to potential wildfires within its jurisdiction. The Department's planning includes the implementation of additional measures beyond those applied on a daily basis. Some of the supplementary measures, which are enacted during Red Alert days and were implemented on 22–23 July 2025, are as follows:

1. Two firefighting aircraft conduct patrols with firefighting agents onboard, while all other aerial assets are placed on heightened alert.
2. The Forest Districts organise additional, exceptional patrols manned by hourly-wage workers and staff in an effort to provide enhanced coverage of areas within the Department of Forests' jurisdiction.



3. All forestry operations (excluding patrols) carried out by Department personnel are suspended. Any training sessions and meetings are also suspended, and staff are redeployed to respond to potential wildfire incidents.

4. The Divisional Forest Officers, Divisional Protection Officers, Standby Duty Coordinators, Assistant Divisional Forest Officers, and Valley Supervisors continuously monitor radio communications and maintain contact with patrols and fire lookout stations, so as to ensure that personnel fully understand the prevailing high-risk conditions.

5. The Forest Officers responsible for wildfire response teams ensure that no regular leave is granted to the firefighters. If deemed necessary, the Director of the Department may revoke any approved leave of firefighters.

6. The deployment of the greatest possible number of firefighting vehicles to predetermined strategic locations is prioritised. Vehicles remaining at the station are repositioned to preparedness points for immediate departure, with crews stationed nearby in full firefighting gear and prepared for rapid mobilisation.

7. At least two bulldozers from each Division are loaded onto trucks and deployed towards the areas of greatest risk. Their crews remain close to the vehicles/machinery.

8. At least one water tanker from each Division is placed on standby, with the driver remaining near the vehicle.

9. The District Forest Officers cooperate with other Services and Agencies (such as the Game and Fauna Service, the Civil Defence, local Communities, trained Volunteer Groups, etc.) that operate staffed rapid response firefighting vehicles, which are utilised both for conducting patrols and for manning observation posts.

It is also noted that, in assessing the adverse fire-weather conditions prevailing on 23 July 2025 – particularly on the southern slopes of the Troodos region – the Director of the Department of Forests relocated from the Central Offices to the Kakomallis Forest Station at 12:00 noon. This practice is routinely followed

by the Director of the Department on days when unfavourable fire-weather conditions prevail.

## **6. Actions taken by the Department of Forests to respond to the wildfire that broke out in Malia on 23 July 2025**

The location where the wildfire broke out was outside the fire protection zone under the jurisdiction of the Department of Forests. As such, operational coordination was assumed by the Fire Service Chief Fire Officer. The Department of Forests deployed resources in support of the Fire Service, following communication and coordination between the Fire Service Chief Fire Officer and the Director of the Department of Forests, from the early stages of the incident through to its full containment.

By decision of the Fire Service Chief Fire Officer, the Special National Plan “PYRSOS” and the Plan “IKAROS II” were activated. Following consultation between the Director of the Department of Forests and the Fire Service Chief Fire Officer, the Department of Forests assumed responsibility for the north-eastern front of the wildfire, with the primary objective of protecting the communities of Arsos, Omodos, Koilani, Kouka, Sylikou, Agios Georgios Sylikou, Doros, Monagri, and Alassa, as well as preventing the fire from spreading towards the Troodos Forest.

When requested by the Chief Fire Officer, during the early hours of 24 July 2025, the Department of Forests took action to support the Fire Service in combating the southern front of the wildfire, primarily through the deployment and management of bulldozers.



**Photograph of the wildfire taken from an aerial platform on 23 July 2025  
at 14:20.**



**Photograph of the wildfire taken from an aerial platform on 23 July 2025  
at 19:47.**

The table below presents, in chronological order, the actions undertaken by the Department of Forests during the initial stages of the wildfire on 23 July 2025.

<b>TIME</b>	<b>ACTIONS</b>
13:34	Report of the wildfire by a citizen to the General Operations Centre of the Department of Forests via the 1407 hotline.
13:35	The information was forwarded to the Fire Service Operations Centre. The Fire Service reported that it had already been informed of the incident and had dispatched resources.
13:36	Notification from the General Operations Centre to the Divisional Forest Officer of Troodos regarding the outbreak of the wildfire occurring over 2 km beyond the boundaries of the State Forest, within the jurisdiction of the Fire Service.
13:52	Telephone communication between the Director of the Department of Forests and the Divisional Forest Officer of Pafos regarding the preparation of forces for deployment to the wildfire. On the Director's initiative, instructions were given to the Divisional Forest Officer of Pafos for the immediate dispatch of two bulldozers to the wildfire (sourced from the private sector).
13:57	Request from the Fire Service to the Department of Forests for the deployment of resources.
13:57	Notification from the General Operations Centre to the Director of the Department of Forests and the Standby Duty Coordinators of the Troodos and Pafos Forest Divisions regarding the Fire Service's request.
14:01	Telephone communication between the Director of the Department of Forests and the Divisional Forest Officer of Troodos regarding the preparation of forces for deployment to the wildfire.
14:15	Initial communication between the Director of the Department of Forests and the Fire Service Chief Fire Officer regarding the deployment of assistance from the Department of Forests to support operations.

14:18	Direct communication between the Director of the Department of Forests and a private bulldozer operator regarding deployment to the wildfire.
14:59	Direct communication between the Director of the Department of Forests and a second private bulldozer operator regarding deployment to the wildfire.
15:51	Telephone communication between the Director of the Department of Forests and the Deputy Divisional Forest Officer of Larnaka – Lefkosia – Ammochostos regarding the preparation of forces.
16:13	Report of smoke detected in the area of Agios Mamas – Kalo Chorio (Lemesou). Activation of the “Astrapi” Plan by the forces of the Kakomallis Forest Station. Alarm lifted and forces returned to the Forest Station.
16:30	Departure of the Director of the Department of Forests from Kakomallis Forest Station en route to the wildfire at Malia.
17:10	Telephone communication between the Director of the Department of Forests and the Deputy Divisional Forest Officer of Larnaka – Lefkosia – Ammochostos, including instructions for the deployment of regional forces to the wildfire.

The following table presents, in chronological order, the firefighting resources deployed by the Department of Forests to the wildfire on 23 July 2025.

<b>No.</b>	<b>Forest Division</b>	<b>Forest Station</b>	<b>Vehicle</b>	<b>Departure Time</b>	<b>Arrival time at the wildfire</b>
1.	Pafos	Agios Nikolaos	Fire engine	13:53	14:07
2.	Troodos	Saittas	Fire engine	14:22	14:35
3.	Troodos	Platania	Fire engine	14:22	14:42

<b>No.</b>	<b>Forest Division</b>	<b>Forest Station</b>	<b>Vehicle</b>	<b>Departure Time</b>	<b>Arrival time at the wildfire</b>
4.	Troodos	Lemosos	Fire engine	14:04	14:44
5.	Pafos	Geroskipou	Fire engine	14:29	15:22
6.	Pafos	Private individual (M. Marasinos)	Bulldozer	14:15	15:30
7.	Pafos	Private individual (M. Marasinos)	Bulldozer	14:15	15:30
8.	Troodos	Platres	Fire engine	15:15	15:39
9.	Troodos	Platania	Fire engine	15:44	16:23
10.	Pafos	Private individual (Ch. Kleopa)	Bulldozer	15:00	16:30
11.	Troodos	Kapoura	Fire engine	16:25	17:05
12.	Troodos	Platania	Fire engine	17:06	17:17
13.	Troodos	Platania	Water tanker	17:00	17:20
14.	Troodos	Platania	Fire engine	17:00	17:20
15.	Troodos	Platania	Bulldozer	16:40	17:36
16.	Troodos	Platania	Water tanker	17:14	18:00
17.	Troodos	Platania	Bulldozer	17:14	18:00

<b>No.</b>	<b>Forest Division</b>	<b>Forest Station</b>	<b>Vehicle</b>	<b>Departure Time</b>	<b>Arrival time at the wildfire</b>
18.	Pafos	Panagia (OYP)	Fire engine	17:04	18:15
19.	Lefkosia – Larnaka – Ammochostos	Kornos	Bulldozer	17:15	18:32
20.	Lefkosia – Larnaka – Ammochostos	Lythrodontas	Water tanker	17:19	18:42
21.	Lefkosia – Larnaka – Ammochostos	Lythrodontas	Fire engine	17:13	18:42
22.	Lefkosia – Larnaka – Ammochostos	Lythrodontas	Fire engine	17:12	18:42
23.	Pafos	Drouseia	Fire engine	17:30	19:15
24.	Troodos	Agios Theodoros	Fire engine	18:18	19:19
25.	Troodos	Agios Theodoros	Fire engine	18:18	19:19
26.	Pafos	Gialia	Fire engine	17:30	19:30
27.	Pafos	Lysos	Bulldozer	17:45	19:50
28.	Pafos	Private individual (K. Christodoulou)	Bulldozer	17:40	20:00
29.	Troodos	Orkontas	Fire engine	19:48	21:12
30.	Troodos	Platania	Bulldozer	21:00	21:30

<b>No.</b>	<b>Forest Division</b>	<b>Forest Station</b>	<b>Vehicle</b>	<b>Departure Time</b>	<b>Arrival time at the wildfire</b>
31.	Troodos	Kakomallis	Bulldozer	21:00	21:30
32.	Troodos	Kakomallis	Fire engine	20:14	21:30
33.	Troodos	Kakomallis	Fire engine	20:14	21:30
34.	Pafos	Private individual (Ch. Kleopa)	Bulldozer	17:55	22:30
35.	Pafos	Private individual (Th. Andreou)	Water tanker	18:10	23:00

The table below presents a consolidated overview of the firefighting resources of the Department of Forests that were deployed in the suppression of the wildfire on 23 July 2025.

<b>No.</b>	<b>Firefighting Resources – 23/7/2025</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Firefighting Resources by Forest Division</b>		
			<b>Troodos</b>	<b>Pafos</b>	<b>Lefkosia – Larnaka – Ammochostos</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Fire engines</b>	20	13	5	2
<b>2</b>	<b>Bulldozers</b>	11	4	6	1
<b>3</b>	<b>Water tankers</b>	4	2	1	1

The table below presents a consolidated overview of the Department of Forests personnel who participated in the suppression of the wildfire on 23 July 2025.



No.	Personnel – 23/7/2025	Total	Personnel by Forest Division		
			Troodos	Pafos	Lefkosia – Larnaka – Ammochostos
1	Forest Officers	29*	18	6	3
2	Forest Firefighters	73	38	24	11
3	Machinery Operators (bulldozers and trucks)	25	10	13	2
*The Director of the Department of Forests and the Chief Conservator of Forests, Mr K. Papageorgiou, are included in the total.					

It is also noted that on 23 July 2025, the Department of Forests assisted the Fire Service in suppressing the following wildfires, deploying the following resources:

1. Fire at Mathiatis (reported via 1407 at 08:13): The suppression effort involved 11 fire engines, two bulldozers, three water tankers, one agricultural tractor, and 43 personnel.
2. Fire at Anageia (reported via 1407 at 12:45): The suppression effort involved six fire engines and twenty personnel.
3. Fire at Agia Marinouda (reported via 1407 at 15:32): The suppression effort involved two fire engines, two bulldozers, and ten personnel.

## 7. Conclusions

1. The area where the wildfire ignited was subject to extremely adverse pyro-meteorological conditions that facilitated the ignition and rapid spread of the wildfire, which is estimated to have burned approximately 8 to 10 km<sup>2</sup> per hour during the first ten hours following its ignition.

2. The point of origin of the wildfire was outside the fire protection jurisdiction of the Department of Forests, and the coordination of operations was undertaken by the Fire Service Chief Fire Officer, who activated the Special National Plan “PYRSOS” and the “IKAROS II” Plan.

3. There was communication and coordination between the Fire Service Chief Fire Officer and the Director of the Department of Forests from the initial stages of the wildfire's outbreak until its full containment.

4. The Department of Forests deployed resources to support the Fire Service.

5. Following consultation between the Director of the Department of Forests and the Fire Service Chief Fire Officer, the Department of Forests took charge of the north-eastern front, with the primary objective of protecting the communities of Arsos, Omodos, Koilani, Kouka, Sylikou, Agios Georgios Sylikou, Doros, Monagri, and Alassa, as well as preventing the fire's spread towards the Troodos Forest.

6. Upon request by the Fire Service Chief Fire Officer, the Department of Forests took action to support the Fire Service in addressing the southern front of the wildfire, primarily through the deployment of bulldozers.

7. Under the circumstances, it is assessed that the Department of Forests successfully completed the task assigned to it.

8. The system for managing wildfires (outside the Department of Forests' jurisdiction) presents weaknesses. This was also identified following the evaluation of the Arakapas fire in 2021, resulting in the assignment of a specialised expert to prepare a study on “Wildfire Management in Rural Areas”. The relevant study was completed in February 2025. Key aspects of the study, for which the Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment has provided instructions for its utilisation since March 2025, include the following:

- The design and detailed description of a unified and integrated Wildfire Management System for Rural Areas, which includes all three core components: prevention, preparedness, and suppression, similar to the system applied by the Department of Forests within the state forests.

- The deployment of the required resources throughout the entire rural area, ensuring that, in principle, the maximum intervention time does not exceed ten minutes.
- A description of the role of each involved service in every component of the proposed Wildfire Management System for Rural Areas.
- A comprehensive assessment and documentation of the needs in terms of equipment, infrastructure, and human resources for each service individually, considering the role that service will play in the proposed design.

9. There are significant weaknesses in the implementation of preventive measures in rural areas, particularly regarding the management of vegetation with the aim of fire protection for the communities.

10. The utilisation of community volunteers, who can serve as first responders in the event of a fire within their community boundaries, demonstrates that there is room for improvement.

11. The management of unsolicited, untrained volunteers during incidents that escalate into a crisis presents significant weaknesses, to the extent that it could lead to catastrophic consequences and requires improvement.

## **8. Suggestions**

### **1. Improvement of the rural fire management system (outside the jurisdiction of the Department of Forests)**

In order to improve the rural fire management system (outside the jurisdiction of the Department of Forests), by the end of the current fire season, actions should be initiated to implement the recommendations outlined in the study on “Rural Fire Management”, which has been prepared by an expert.

The key findings and recommendations of the relevant Study, which conclude the need for a gradual but substantial reform, include:

- The adoption of a new operational model for fire management in rural areas;

- The strengthening of the involved services with additional human resources, modern equipment, and infrastructure;
- The necessary legislative amendments and institutional interventions; and
- The decisive financial, administrative, and structural actions required for the successful implementation of the proposal.

The implementation of the proposed reform, due to the complexity and scale of the required changes, should be carried out gradually and within a timeframe of at least five years, as recommended by the Study. There are no medium-term measures included in the Study. It is emphasised that any rushed implementation would cause significant issues with the operational capacity and effectiveness of the involved services, with unpredictable consequences.

## **2. Implementation of prevention measures in rural areas**

The factors that influence the behaviour of a wildfire and consequently its spread include meteorological data, topographical data, and combustible materials. The only factor that can be managed and, as a result, mitigate the adverse effects of a potential wildfire is the combustible material, i.e., the dead or living biomass (vegetation).

Therefore, it is necessary to implement vegetation management measures that will contribute to enhancing fire protection, both for forests and for the forest-adjacent communities. The goal of these measures should be to create a continuous protection ring around each community. This ring can be established through the combined implementation of various measures such as:

- Silvicultural measures (thinning, pruning);
- The creation of green firebreaks (e.g. the establishment and maintenance of vineyards and other agricultural crops);
- The creation of firebreaks (without vegetation);
- The cultivation of existing agricultural land;

- The removal of roadside vegetation on both sides of roads;
- The widening of existing roads and/or the creation of new ones;
- The management of riparian vegetation;
- Controlled grazing; and
- Controlled burning.

In addition to the above, separate measures must also be taken by all property owners within their estates, where applicable, such as:

- The creation of a firebreak zone at least 3 metres wide, free of vegetation, around the premises;
- The removal of all dry undergrowth and other flammable materials from the entire area of their plots;
- The pruning of all tall shrubs and trees to one-third of their height, and removal of the remnants;
- The installation of water supplies connected to hoses to cover the entire perimeter of the plot where the premises are located, with provision to ensure adequate water pressure at all times;
- The placement of a pump, where a swimming pool is available, to provide the ability to use water in case of fire;
- Ensuring that firefighting tools (such as rake hoes, shovels, axes, etc.) are available;
- Ensuring proper access for firefighting vehicles;
- In the case of the presence of a barbecue, all vegetation within 3 metres around it should be removed; And
- In the case of a chimney (from a barbecue, fireplace, wood stove, etc.), it should be covered with a fine mesh or other material capable of preventing the spread of embers.

In this context, the “Vegetation Management Study for Forest Fire Protection of Forests and Surrounding Communities”, prepared by the Department of Forests is also being utilised. The study covers 245 communities. The responsible bodies for implementing the measures outlined in the study are the Department of Forests for areas within state forests, and the Local Authorities

for areas outside state forests. The Department of Forests is already proceeding with the implementation of various measures within the state forests.

The removal of the *pinus brutia* from the core areas of the villages, from the points where it is adjacent to homes and other infrastructure, as well as from areas surrounding the communities, is considered necessary. This species, due to its high resin content and flammable canopy, acts as an accelerant for fires and poses a serious threat to the communities. As a management strategy, we propose replacing the pinus brutia with more fire-resistant and less flammable broadleaf species, such as the Cyprus Oak, plane trees, and other native broadleaf trees, which offer greater fire resilience and contribute to biodiversity. At the same time, there is an emphasis on the need to return grazing and traditional agricultural practices to the areas surrounding the villages, which act as natural barriers to the spread of fires, as well as a means of revitalising the cultural and agricultural landscape of the rural areas.

**3. The establishment of a Competent Authority responsible for the proper management of spontaneous, untrained volunteers during incidents that escalate into a crisis.**

#### **4. Improvement of volunteer utilisation processes in communities**

- Adoption of common agreed protocols that define the overall operation of volunteers and the framework for their utilisation. Provision of appropriate means and equipment to all communities.
- Firefighting vehicles owned by the communities should remain within them and be utilised by trained community volunteers.
- Proper and systematic training for community volunteers.
- Involvement of community volunteers in joint exercises with the relevant authorities.

## **5. Regulation of environmental policies and legislation that conflict with fire protection goals**

There is a need to rationalise existing environmental policies and legislation, which in many cases conflict with the goal of preventing and addressing major fires. It has been observed that certain regulations, although established with the intention of protecting the environment, ultimately hinder the implementation of critical preventive measures such as clearing, creating firebreaks, and managing flammable biomass. This issue is identified both in the management of private areas and in the management of State Forests.

Furthermore, at times, strict and even aggressive approaches towards the public are adopted, which are inconsistent with the long-standing policy of the Department of Forests to cooperate with citizens and local communities. Such approaches, combined with inadequate dialogue and understanding of local conditions, may lead to significant public dissatisfaction, which in extreme cases result in illegal and condemnable acts, such as arson. The restructuring of these policies, with an emphasis on preserving the environment while maintaining flexibility in fire protection, is now imperative.