

Residents flee blazes in Western Canada as record fire season continues

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San Francisco, August 18 (RHC)-- Firefighting crews are battling massive wildfireResidents flee blazes in Western Canada as record fire season continues in parts of Western Canada, where thousands of people have been ordered to evacuate out of the path of the advancing flames.

Authorities in the Northwest Territories issued a state of emergency this week as more than 230 wildfires burned across the sprawling territory, including a major fire that is approaching its capital and largest city, Yellowknife.

Officials have ordered the city's 20,000 residents to evacuate by noon (18:00 GMT) on Friday. Thousands have fled, driving hundreds of kilometres to safety or waiting in long lines for emergency flights. At the Big River Service Station about 300km (185 miles) south of Yellowknife, a line of vehicles waiting for fuel was "phenomenal", employee Linda Croft said. "You can't see the end of it."

More than 1,000 wildfires are burning across Canada, according to an interagency fire tracker, as the country continues to reel from a record fire season. Of those, 236 were active in the Northwest Territories while another 372 were burning in British Columbia, Canada's westernmost province.

A state of emergency was declared early on Friday in Kelowna, a British Columbia city about 400km (249 miles) northeast of Vancouver, and some residents were told to leave. Some of the hills around the city blazed in the predawn light.

"Residents under Evacuation Alert are advised to be ready to leave their home at a moment's notice," the city said in a statement, adding that people should prepare to be away from their home for an extended period of time.

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