

## Colorado Wildfire Caused \$513M in Damages

The Colorado wildfire caused at least \$513 million in damage and destroyed nearly 1,100 homes and structures, officials as they updated the toll of property lost in the most destructive wildfire in state history.

Boulder County released the new totals after further assessing the suburban area located between Denver and Boulder where entire neighbourhoods were charred. It's the first estimate of economic damage for the Dec. 30 blaze.

A report from catastrophe modeler Karen Clark & Co. forecasts the fire will result in roughly \$1 billion in insured losses.

Authorities previously estimated that at least 991 homes and other buildings were destroyed. Two people are missing, though officials have found partial human remains at one location.

Investigators are still trying to determine what caused the wind-whipped wildfire, which forced thousands to flee on very little notice. The inferno erupted following months of drought and fed on bone-dry grassland surrounding fast-growing development in the area near the Rocky Mountain foothills.

Experts say similar events will become more common as climate change warms the planet and suburbs grow in fire-prone areas. Ninety percent of Boulder County is in severe or extreme drought, and it hadn't seen substantial rainfall since mid-summer.

The fire, which spanned 9.4 square miles, ranks as the most destructive in state history in terms of homes and other structures destroyed and damaged. A 2013 fire outside Colorado Springs destroyed 489 homes and killed two people.

Federal and state investigators have interviewed dozens of people as they work to determine what started the fire on a day when winds surpassed 100 mph. Their efforts are focused on an area near Boulder where a passer-by captured video of a burning shed on the day the fire began.

Disaster experts say the number of possible casualties is remarkably low given how fast the fire ripped through subdivisions and especially considering a public alert system did not reach everyone. Boulder County officials said Thursday that emergency alerts were sent to more than 24,000 contacts. Some 35,000 people fled their homes.