

Calif. prepping for nasty fire season

By Carmen George, Fresno Bee

Firefighters are bracing for a hot year as California's drought has forests primed for early wildfires.

CalFire spokesman Daniel Berlant said firefighters already have responded to over 400 wildfires statewide this year. By comparison, there were no wildfires in the first 3 1/2 weeks of last year, he said.

"The conditions we are experiencing right now are similar to what we would be seeing in August – that's how dry it is," Berlant said. "Even though the calendar says it's February and it's winter, conditions are primed for wildfires."

In response to the drought, CalFire staffing increased statewide last week. Last year, CalFire declared the official start of fire season on May 1. This year, it's likely to be much earlier, Berlant said.

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