

Climate Change, Air Pollution and Global Challenges: Chapter 21. Wildland Fires: Monitoring, Plume Modelling, Impact on Atmospheric Composition and Climate (Developments in Environmental Science)

Mikhail Sofiev

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The chapter gives a short outlook of wildland fires and their influence on atmospheric composition, air quality and climate. Fires are among the most powerful sources of atmospheric tracers and also means of changing the ecosystems themselves. Present pattern of the biomass burning is strongly affected by anthropogenic activities, both via accidental and deliberate ignitions of the fires (about 90% fires are started by humans) and via various fire-fighting and prevention measures. The role of urban-rural interface territories is particularly high in this regard. The fire specifics and impact vary in the different parts of the globe. In forested regions, the bulk of consumed biomass can be attributed to a comparatively small number of major episodes, whereas in arid regions, individual fires are smaller but more numerous. Remote sensing is the primary way of fire monitoring. Three types of products—inventories of burnt areas, count of active fires and estimates of release of fire radiative energy—are available from several satellite instruments. Altogether, they cover the whole globe and span over several decades. Based on this information, several inventories of consumed biomass and atmospheric emissions have been compiled. Their comparison shows qualitative similarity of the products but the differences are substantial. Understanding the reasons for these differences and development of consensus-based methodologies is among the main challenges for the near future.



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