

## Wildfires as a civil protection event: a risky approach for wildfire management policies

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**ABSTRACT** – In recent years is becoming more common to hear and catalog wildfire events as civil protection emergencies. We are also seeing how traditional forestry-based wildfire prevention and suppression systems are being dissolved or prevention and suppression actions are being separated by including suppression in civil protection systems dealing with all type of emergencies, and with a strong component of structural and urban firefighting culture. This separation supposes the break of the management cycle of any emergency that should include all related phases: prevention, preparedness, suppression and recovery. Even more important in wildfires that are related to land and forest management. The reality is that the number of wildfires with real impact in civil protection (affection to population or their properties) is very low, in Spain is around 1%. Something different is the social media impact of those 1% wildfires that nowadays can create alarm on the population and politicians. It is true that the wildland urban interface is increasing and the transit of people enjoying nature too and consequently has the risk. This introduces more and different challenges to wildfire management apart from prevention and suppression, one of it being the civil protection point of view. Wildfires are events that develop and evolve in forests and wildlands with very specific dynamics that are directly related to topography, meteorology and fuel, but are also related to land use or socioeconomic aspects. They turn into emergencies the few times the population is affected and in Spain there are civil protection plans to face these situations by coordinating all the involved actors in the emergency. The risk of shifting all the wildfire fighting system to civil protection-based systems, generally means more investments in suppression assets and defensive firefighting strategies; leaving in a secondary position, when not forgotten, the main key elements of wildfire management: prevention measures, anticipated analysis of the possible scenarios and forest management, subjects that necessarily need forestry-based knowledge and experience. Wildfires are a forestry issue, which needs to be faced in a whole forestry strategy and not only from the civil protection point of view.

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