**Trump baselessly questions climate science during California wildfire briefing**

By [Maegan Vazquez](https://edition.cnn.com/profiles/maegan-vazquez), September 14, 2020 CNN

[President Donald Trump](http://www.cnn.com/specials/politics/president-donald-trump-45" \t "_blank) on Monday baselessly asserted that climate change is not playing a role in the [catastrophic wildfires overtaking forests across the west](http://www.cnn.com/2020/09/14/politics/donald-trump-california-fires/index.html), rebutting an official briefing him who pleaded for the President listen to the science.

"I don't think science knows, actually," Trump said at a Monday briefing with officials in McClellan Park, California, with a laugh.

He told Wade Crowfoot, secretary of California's Natural Resources Agency: "It'll start getting cooler. You just watch."

Crowfoot had warned the President of the dangers of ignoring the science and putting "our head in the sand and thinking that it's all about vegetation management."

[Climate experts tell CNN](https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/09/us/california-wildfires-climate-change/index.html)due to human-caused climate change, temperature extremes are climbing higher and the vegetation is drier, [which affects fire behavior](https://www.cnn.com/2020/08/24/weather/california-wildfires-climate-change/index.html).

Trump was also directly confronted by the state's Democratic governor, Gavin Newsom, who has been adamant about climate change's role in the wildfires, bluntly telling the President: "Climate change is real."

"We obviously feel very strongly the hots are getting hotter," Newsom said. "The dries are getting drier. When we're having heat domes, the likes of which we've never seen in our history."

[Trump renews climate fight in visit to fire-ravaged West Coast](https://edition.cnn.com/2020/09/14/politics/donald-trump-california-fires/index.html)

"We come from a perspective, humbly, where the science is in, and observed evidence is self-evident that climate change is real and that is exacerbating this," the governor added.

Newsom told Trump to "please respect -- and I know you do -- the difference of opinion out here as it relates to this fundamental issue on the issue of climate change."

"Absolutely," Trump responded.

Trump and California officials did agree that continued federal assistance with forest management was necessary.

Just before his briefing, Trump was asked by a reporter what role climate change was playing in the fires.

"Well, I think this is more of a management situation. If you look at other countries, if you go to other countries in Europe, Austria, Finland ... they're forest nations. They're in forests and they don't have problems like this," the President responded.

The President also suggested that other nations need to take responsibility for their levels of pollution more than the US, because the US is "just a small speck."

But when it comes to greenhouse gas emissions, the US doesn't represent a "speck." While US emissions declined in 2019,the [US is still the world's second-largest contributor of planet-warming gases](https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/07/us/us-greenhouse-gas-emissions-fell-in-2019-climate-change/index.html).

"When you get into climate change, well, is India gonna change its ways? And is China gonna change its ways? And Russia? Is Russia gonna change its ways?" Trump asked.

As recently as Saturday, the President has celebrated his decision to pull the US out of the Paris Climate Accord early on in his administration.

The global agreement was meant to address climate change -- precisely the issue experts say is playing a role in the massive blazes. India, China and Russia were all signatories.

As Trump toured the West coast on Monday, Joe Biden delivered a speech in Delaware warning of the devastating effects of climate change, calling the President "climate denier" and a "climate arsonist." He also said that if Trump is given another term in office, it would do untold damage to the country.

Until this past weekend, [the President had remained largely silent on the wildfires](https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/10/politics/trump-california-fires/index.html), which have charred millions of acres of land in California, triggered Oregon officials to prepare for a potential "mass fatality incident," and created apocalyptic orange skies and clouds raining ash that have drifted across cities throughout the West Coast.