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STEAMY NIGHTS IN HEATWAVE BAD FOR YOUR HEALTH

Palma.—Hot night-time temperatures are hindering fire-fighting responses across Europe and worsening health conditions as bedtime fails to provide a cooling reprieve, experts have said.

Across much of the planet, night-time temperatures are actually rising at a faster rate than day-time temperatures under climate change.

“Hotter nights mean people and our environment don’t get a break from climate change,” says Jennifer Balch, a fire ecologist at the University of Colorado Boulder in the United States.

In a February 2022 study in the journal *Nature*, Balch and her team found that the cool, damp nights which once helped tame roaring wildfires are disappearing.

“Nights have become 25% hotter and drier globally over the past 40 years,” says Balch, noting a 36% increase in the number of after-dark hours that are warm and dry enough to sustain fire.

This means that exhausted firefighters aren’t getting a respite.

Currently, some 1,700 firefighters are battling blazes around France’s coastal Gironde region.

Many more have been dispatched to fires in Spain

and Portugal over the last few days.

Sleepless in Europe

Hot nights can also take a toll on people’s physical and mental health.

“Sleep is interrupted for many people during heatwaves,” says Laurence Wainwright, an environmental lecturer at the University of Oxford.

Poorer sleep quality or shorter sleep duration can worsen outcomes in those with major depressive dis-



Fire threat because of rising temperatures.

order. “Tossing and turning and sweating - a few days of that for some people can be problematic,” he explains. Sweltering nights following steamy days can also make it difficult for people to recover.

“The body is trying to get to a lower temperature and that is stressful for the cardiovascular system and keeps the heart rate high,” adds Dominic Roye, a climatologist at the University of Santiago de Compostela in Spain.



Aubergine Madness

By Marc Fosh ● PAGE 30



New art and fashion in Valldemossa

By VICKI MCLEOD ● PAGES 36-37



Whatever the weather

By Anna Nicholas ● PAGE 35

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