

# NATURAL DISASTERS

## Purpose

Understanding the causes of events helps us see the bigger picture and uncover how complex events unfold over time.

## Process

1. Read the excerpt below.

### How and Why the LA Wildfires Grew So Fast—and Lessons for the Future

Adapted from an article by Amy Laskowski

*Boston University Today*. January 16, 2025.

(<https://www.bu.edu/articles/2025/how-and-why-the-la-wildfires-grew-so-fast/>)

Why have these Los Angeles fires spread so fast and ferociously? The answer to this question depends partly on whether you look at the immediate causes or longer-term trends.

In terms of immediate causes, it's likely that human activity such as arson, sparking power lines, or fireworks, triggered the fires. However, LA was experiencing climate conditions— *Santa Ana winds*—which led to strong and very dry winds. These winds fueled any ignitions, making them burn hotter and spread faster and farther. On top of that, the vegetation was exceedingly dry because LA had been experiencing prolonged drought conditions.

What's more, long-standing US government policies of fire suppression have led to dangerous build-ups of fuel so that when the landscape catches fire, there is so much available fuel that fires burn with greater intensity than they would if we hadn't had decades of active fire suppression.

2. Using the article and your background knowledge, list as many causes for the fires as you can, and sort them into short-term, intermediate-term, and long-term causes.

Short-term causes	Intermediate-term causes	Long-term causes