

OP. 146 WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS IN CARREGAL DO SAL, PORTUGAL: EXPLORING PUBLIC ACTIONS AND PERCEIVED RISK

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Abstract: In Portugal, wildfires often threaten the safety of communities. In October 2017, Carregal do Sal was significantly affected, revealing the vulnerabilities of a population poorly equipped to deal with intense fires. Preparation is crucial to mitigate fire impacts and should be actively pursued by organizations and individuals. To enhance readiness, people require skills and tools for planning and action. Hence, initiatives like the "Safe Village" and "Safe People" (ASPS) programs were introduced to prepare populations and promote self-protection measures. This study assesses Carregal do Sal's residents' perceptions of preparedness and evaluates whether ASPS programs can improve readiness for wildfire fires. A questionnaire was distributed online to residents, yielding 123 responses. Additionally, decision-makers responsible for municipal civil protection were surveyed to understand their perspectives and potential challenges in the preparation process. Findings reveal that nearly 40% of respondents were unaware of the ASPS programs and lacked knowledge about them, a sentiment echoed by decision-makers citing people's unpreparedness for fires. This research underscores the need to tailor existing programs to local realities and needs to garner community support and emphasize the importance of preparation.

Keywords: Rural fires, preparedness, self-protection, Carregal do Sal