

Paris, 1 February 2017  
PR019 - 2017

# Forest fires in Chile

## CNES activates SPOT satellites to aid firefighters

**Chile has been suffering in recent weeks from a series of devastating forest fires. The SPOT satellites have been in action acquiring imagery of fire-affected areas for the International Charter on Space and Major Disasters.**

Since mid-January, more than 150 raging wildfires have swept through more than 400,000 hectares of forest in central and southern Chile. ONEMI, Chile's civil protection agency, activated the International Charter on Space and Major Disasters on Tuesday 24 January. Co-founded by CNES and ESA in 2000, the Charter delivers free satellite imagery to support emergency relief efforts in countries hit by natural disasters.

Alongside other satellites activated for the Charter, France's SPOT satellites have been called into action to acquire imagery of the fire-affected areas. Thanks to its expertise and experience in the civil domain, CNES is today a key partner for civil protection teams. With their agility enabling daily revisits to any point on the globe and the quality and location accuracy of their imagery, the SPOT satellites are a valuable tool in such a crisis. The SPOT 6 and SPOT 7 satellites were thus tasked to acquire 1.5-metre-resolution colour imagery from 25 January.

Four thousand people are battling to contain the fires. Chile's President Michelle Bachelet said "we have never seen anything on this scale, never in the history of Chile" and has called for international assistance. Several countries have responded to her call, with France sending a team of firefighters to support operations over the next four weeks or so. COGIC, the French interministerial crisis management unit, has requested access to satellite imagery and rapid damage maps to organize logistics.

SERTIT, the French regional image processing and remote sensing department, produced three maps for CNES showing fire-affected areas around the town of Lolol on Friday 27 January. These maps were delivered to COGIC within four hours and sent immediately to firefighting teams on the ground. Monday 30 January, the French contingent was posted 250 kilometres further south to protect the city of Concepción, encircled by flames. The same day, SERTIT produced a damage map of this area from satellite imagery acquired the day before, and the SPOT satellites have been tasked to acquire fresh imagery from 1 February.

CNES is coordinating SPOT satellite tasking, French civil protection needs and SERTIT operations. This is the Charter's 518<sup>th</sup> activation since its inception in 2000 and the second this year. It has already been activated 22 times before for Chile.

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