

Australians urged to 'leave early' in face of new bushfire threat

Australian officials issued fresh evacuation warnings Wednesday ahead of a forecast **spike** in the intensity of out-of-control bushfires that have **devastated** vast swathes of countryside and sent smoke clouds as far away as Brazil.

spike 长钉; 高跟

devastate 毁灭; 毁坏

Residents of Victoria state's fire-**ravaged** east were urged to leave before another heatwave raises the bushfire danger Friday, while in South Australia state authorities began **relocating** people from a small community on Kangaroo Island.

ravage 破坏; 蹂躏

relocate 迁移

"Leave, and leave early, " Victoria police minister Lisa Neville urged those in the danger zone.

"Everything we've done in terms of ... issuing warnings has been about saving lives, and today I'm asking people to continue to heed the messages that we are giving."

The catastrophic bushfires have been fuelled by a **crippling** drought that has turned forests to **tinder** and **exacerbated** by climate change, which scientists say is increasing the length and intensity of Australia's fire season.

cripple 削弱; 损坏; 瘸子

crippling 造成严重后果的

tinder 易燃物

exacerbate 使恶化; 使加剧

Authorities on Wednesday confirmed that a fourth firefighter had died while battling the blazes, bringing the overall death toll to 26 people.

More than 2, 000 homes have been destroyed since the crisis began in September and some eight million hectares (80, 000 square kilometres) has been burned, an area the size of Ireland or South Carolina.

University of Sydney scientists estimate one billion animals have been killed in the fires. The figure includes mammals, birds and **reptiles**, but not frogs, insects or invertebrates.

reptile 爬行动物；卑鄙的人

Smoke from the fires has been spotted more than 12, 000 kilometres (7, 400 miles) away in Brazil and **Argentina**, weather authorities in the South American countries said.

Argentina 阿根廷的