

For Immediate Release



AUB team helps develop web-based forest fire prediction system

Beirut, Lebanon- 18/08/2011 - An AUB team of researchers was instrumental in developing a forest fire prediction system which could help municipalities, ministries, and fire departments better manage their resources while preventing and combating forest fires. Led by electrical and computer engineering professor Imad Elhajj from the American University of Beirut in collaboration with the Association for Forests, Development and Conservation (AFDC) and Professor George Mitri from the University of Balamand, the team developed an internet-based, free access system that uses data on weather conditions to predict the level of forest fire risk for different areas in Lebanon. Daily predictions for four regions in Lebanon may be accessed at the Faculty of Engineering website: <http://webfea.fea.aub.edu.lb/predict>. Alternatively, individuals could choose to receive email alerts if they contact imad.elhajj@aub.edu.lb.

“The system on its own cannot reduce forest fires, but it can predict the risk of fire occurrence,” noted Professor Elhajj. “But if people respond to the risk by taking simple preventative measures, many forest fires could be avoided.”

Elhajj explained that on high-risk days, people should refrain from using fireworks, throwing lit cigarettes, having barbecues or burning anything outdoors.

“Imagine if, along with the weather forecast, TV stations and other news media would broadcast the daily risk for forest fires, alerting communities to refrain from burning flammable substances in the open air on such days!”

The forest fire detection system was funded by AFDC and AUB. Technical support for integrating weather data was provided by the Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute (LARI) and historical forest fire data provided by the Ministry of Environment (MoE). The proposed system is in line with Lebanon’s national strategy for forest fire management as outlined in Decree No. 52 - 13/5/2009.

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Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A

teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 600 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full service 420-bed hospital.

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