

13 NOW DEAD IN GATLINBURG WILDFIRES

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GATLINBURG, TN (AP) - A Tennessee mayor says 13 people have died from wildfires that ravaged the Great Smoky Mountains, including a person who appears to have had a heart attack while fleeing the flames.

Sevier County Mayor Larry Waters announced the additional deaths during a news conference Friday. The mayor also raised the number of homes and businesses that were damaged to nearly 1,000.

Waters spoke as business owners and home owners were returning to the city of Gatlinburg for the first time since the wildfires began damaging the area Monday.

Officials also say a Memphis, Tennessee, couple are among the 13 people who died in the wildfires.

They said Friday that Jon and Janet Summers, both 61 years old, were among the dead. Their three adult sons became separated from their parents during the wildfires and the three young men were severely injured. They have been recovering at a hospital in Nashville. One of them has been released.

The dead also included a couple from Canada and another woman who was vacationing. Officials have not identified the other victims, but did say one person appeared to die of a heart attack while fleeing the flames.

Nearly 1,000 homes and businesses were damaged.



Meanwhile, thousands of people are preparing to get their first look at what remains of their homes and businesses after a wildfire tore through the resort community of Gatlinburg in the eastern Tennessee mountains.

Local officials, bowing to pressure from frustrated property owners, said they allowed people back into most parts of the city and affected parts of the county for the first time Friday beginning at 10 a.m.

Gatlinburg City Manager Cindy Cameron Ogle says residents have to pass through a checkpoint and must show some proof of ownership or residency. She says the city is not implying that private property is safe and that people may encounter downed power lines and other dangers.