

Transcription:

**Amy:** Hi, this is Amy from Real English Conversations. And today we're going to be talking about forest fires. And for the Real English tip we're going to tell you what a looky loo is.

**Curtis:** Hey, everybody. It's Amy and Curtis from RealEnglishConversations.com and today we're going to be talking about a natural disaster that happens in our area where we live, and it's forest fires. Now what are forest fires, Amy?

**Amy:** Well, forest fires are fires obviously that start in the forest, just like it sounds. But these are...are accidents or sometimes they're caused naturally.

**Curtis:** Yes.

**Amy:** But it's a fire that is wild in the forest, it's...it's uncontrolled.

**Curtis:** Yes.

**Amy:** It's unintentional that it's there. So for example, a forest fire might start by being either human caused, which would make it an accident.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** Or it might be something in nature that has happened. So what happens in nature that causes forest fires to start?

**Curtis:** Well, sometimes thunderstorms.

**Amy:** Yeah.

**Curtis:** Come through our area and with thunderstorms is lightning, of course.

**Amy:** Yeah. And **lightning strikes**<sup>1a</sup> can definitely start fires.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** Like if a **lightning bolt**<sup>1b</sup> hits a tree it will light on fire.

**Curtis:** On fire. And it's because forest fire season is in the summertime. And everything around us is super dry, so a fire will start quicker.

**Amy:** Yeah. So if it has been raining, and there was a lightning strike that hit a tree in the forest, it wouldn't likely start a fire. Like it might...that tree might burn, or get charred a little bit, but it's not going to start a fire. But right now what's happened is we've had the hottest and driest summer in...isn't it over 50 years or **something like that**<sup>2</sup>?

**Curtis:** Something like that.

**Amy:** Yeah. So we've had very little rain and extremely hot temperatures, so it...in the forest, it's so dry. If there's like, for example, human caused, like a cigarette butt, a lit cigarette butt that is flicked out the window.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** And it lands in a ditch with some dry grass, what happens?

**Curtis:** It takes within seconds for a fire...

**Amy:** Yeah, a grass fire to start.

**Curtis:** ...a grass fire to start.

**Amy:** Which can spread to trees in a nearby forest, and start a more serious forest fire.

**Curtis:** And if it's really windy, that makes the conditions even worse.

**Amy:** Yeah, because the fire spreads really quickly. So have we already had a grass fire due to a cigarette butt in our area?

**Curtis:** Yeah. Just about 8 kilometres up the road.

**Amy:** Yeah. Someone on the highway threw their cigarette out the window and it created a forest fire that people had to **evacuate**<sup>3</sup> from the area, they had to leave their homes and pack up their animals and things like that.

**Curtis:** They even closed the road.

**Amy:** Yeah, because it's dangerous, forest fires are dangerous. So what are some of the other ways that forest fires start, human-caused forest fires.

**Curtis:** Human-caused forest fires can start from if somebody leaves a campfire unattended.

**Amy:** Yeah, and maybe it's windy or something happens, some of the sparks go into the forest. With it being so dry, it could start a forest fire. And something that is a little bit, it's like an indirect human-caused forest fire is if there's something like a glass that's left in the forest.

**Curtis:** Okay.

**Amy:** It's kind of like magnifying glass effect, if you...if the sun shines in the glass at a certain angle, it can strengthen the intensity of the sun, and almost create a...a little bit of fire underneath it, if the conditions are right.

**Curtis:** Um-hum.

**Amy:** And there's forest fires that start in that way, too.

**Curtis:** That's true.

**Amy:** So we have people throwing cigarette butts out the window.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** People leaving campfires unattended.

**Curtis:** Yes.

**Amy:** And some garbage, or glass, that can...can start a forest fire as well as **Mother Nature**<sup>4</sup>...

**Curtis:** Yeah. With...

**Amy:** ...with her lightning.

**Curtis:** ...lightning.

**Amy:** Yes. So, ah, what...we had a lightning storm a couple of days ago, right?

**Curtis:** Yeah, a couple days ago. And it was pretty intense.

**Amy:** There was a lot of lightning.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** And everybody knew it was going to start fires.

**Curtis:** Um-hum.

**Amy:** How many first started overnight? Do you remember?

**Curtis:** I think it was 60...

**Amy:** Yeah...

**Curtis:** ...or 70 new fires.

**Amy:** ...60 or 70 new fires overnight.

**Curtis:** A lot.

**Amy:** Okay. And then...so that was two nights ago we had this lightning storm.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** And what happened last night?

**Curtis:** Last night we had strong, heavy winds.

**Amy:** Really strong. Like we were at our friends' house hanging out and they have a beach, like we were on the lake, they have a beach in their backyard. And we had to go to the other side of the house to...to block the wind, because there was sand flying up off the beach.

**Curtis:** It was so strong and seemed like it got stronger really fast.

**Amy:** Yeah, with really big wind gusts. So what ended up happening was there was one of these 60 forest fires that started the...the night before, was really propelled or **fuelled**<sup>5</sup> with the wind.

**Curtis:** Yes.

**Amy:** And before we went to bed, we were looking on Facebook, and we started to see these crazy pictures of the forest fire. And how big was it last night, before we went to bed?

**Curtis:** Around 30 hectares. So you guys can imagine...

**Amy:** Yeah, how...okay. A hectare is a measurement, right? Like a metric measurement.

**Curtis:** Measurement.

**Amy:** So what it is is it's actually 100 metres by 100 metres, or in other words, 1000 **squared**<sup>6</sup> metres.

**Curtis:** So...

**Amy:** No, that's not right. 10,000 squared metres. I'm bad at math. So 10,000 squared metres. But it's hard for us...that sounds big. And it is.

**Curtis:** Uh-huh.

**Amy:** But how can we visualize that?

**Curtis:** Well, if you know what an American football field looks like...

**Amy:** Um-hum.

**Curtis:** It's the same size.

**Amy:** Yeah. More or less, it's the same size.

**Curtis:** So if you can imagine 30 football fields...

**Amy:** Football fields of burning forest, that's how big the fire was last night.

**Curtis:** And with strong winds.

**Amy:** How much did it grow overnight?

**Curtis:** It doubled in size.

**Amy:** More than doubled. Curtis's math is bad too. It actually went from 30 hectares to a 175 hectares. So it almost was six times bigger in a period of 8 hours.

**Curtis:** Um-hum.

**Amy:** And today...so when we woke up this morning, the fire was at 175 hectares.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** And the last update, which is...

**Curtis:** Just before...

**Amy:** ...6 hours later. How big is it now?

**Curtis:** 300 hectares.

**Amy:** So it's pretty much doubled in size again. So this is a super-aggressive forest fire.

**Curtis:** Um-hum.

**Amy:** So what are they doing to...to try to stop this forest fire? Like it can't just keep growing?

**Curtis:** No, and they're not going to let it.

**Amy:** Well, they're going to try not to let it. But this is a natural occurrence that happens, and if there's wind and dry forest, it keeps...keeps going.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** People can't be near it. They'll...they would die if they were, you know, trying to fight it in the direction it was coming. So what do they do?

**Curtis:** They have people that are forest fire fighters.

**Amy:** Yeah, like they're fire fighters, but they're specifically hired for the season.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** And they're...they're people that fight the forest fires.

**Curtis:** Um-hum.

**Amy:** That's their jobs. So they're not full time forest fighters, or...um, fire fighters, like the ones if your house is burning. Those are the fire fighters, but...

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** Yeah.

**Curtis:** So they have these people on the ground.

**Amy:** Um-hum.

**Curtis:** Actually in the area.

**Amy:** Yeah. They're...they're in a safe area, but they're to, ah, they're trying to do things to stop the fire. So, for example, there's people that...that are on the ground and they're...I don't even know what they do specifically, but I know that, you know, they probably have water hoses and stuff like that and...and shovels, and just trying to put out the old fire, so it doesn't **reignite**<sup>7</sup> and keep spreading.

**Curtis:** I think they dig trenches and try to put up guards.

**Amy:** Yeah, they put up fire guards. So what a fire guard is, they actually cut a fairly big amount of trees down, and remove the wood, so that when the fire reaches that point, the fire has a harder time, um, like if it's in one tree and it's burning, the tree is burning, if a tree is right next to it, it's very easy for that tree next to the burning tree to start lighting on fire, and that's kind of how it travels. Especially with some wind. So what they do is they cut down a section of the trees so that hopefully when the one tree is burning, there's no other tree that's right next to it for it to continue. So this is what they...they do really, really quickly, they anticipate the direction that they think the fire's going and they put up one of these fire grids.

**Curtis:** Yeah. They also fight the fire, um, from the air as well.

**Amy:** Okay. And what do they do in that way?

**Curtis:** Well, we've got a lake where we live.

**Amy:** Yeah, we've got a lot of lakes. We're really lucky in this sense.

**Curtis:** So that's obviously water. So the planes will fly down and scoop up the water.

**Amy:** Yeah, it's like they skim across the top of the water to collect it in I guess a chamber within the air plane, the bottom of the air plane.

**Curtis:** Um-hum. And then the helicopters actually have buckets..

**Amy:** Yeah.

**Curtis:** ...that they fill with water too.

**Amy:** But after...air planes, they don't stop when they do this. Let's...let's talk about this first. So...

**Curtis:** Okay.

**Amy:** ...the air plane, it comes down and it goes across the water, skims across the water, still moving.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** And then it takes off again, flies over the fire, and drops the water over the fire, in the area that is strategic to try to stop it, or contain the fire.

**Curtis:** Right.

**Amy:** Okay. So then the helicopters, what do they do?

**Curtis:** They have buckets...

**Amy:** They have buckets.

**Curtis:** ...that hang from underneath the helicopter.

**Amy:** Yeah.

**Curtis:** And so they lower the helicopter so the bucket...

**Amy:** Fills with water.

**Curtis:** ...fills with water. And they...

**Amy:** Take off.

**Curtis:** ...take off again.

**Amy:** And they drive—or I guess fly—to whatever area that they need to go and they release the water.

**Curtis:** Uh-huh.

**Amy:** And they go back and do it again.

**Curtis:** Oh, I've also seen air planes drop some sort of a red...

**Amy:** Oh, yeah. Like a fire retardant.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** Yeah, yeah. So they...this is another way of creating a fire guard.

**Curtis:** Okay.

**Amy:** So they'll drop the retardant, which means a fire...it's like a flame barrier, like it doesn't burn.

**Curtis:** Um-hum.

**Amy:** It stops things from burning.

**Curtis:** Yes.

**Amy:** So they drop this fire retardant on the trees. When the fire gets to it, it's supposed to...those trees shouldn't continue to...to light on fire.

**Curtis:** Um-hum.

**Amy:** So we have this forest fire thing happen every summer.

**Curtis:** Every summer.

**Amy:** It doesn't matter if its the worst summer, driest, hottest summer ever. Even if it's a normal summer, forest fires happen.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** This year just happens to be a little bit more intense. And we'll make sure that we put some articles and stuff that...that you guys can check out some pictures.

**Curtis:** Yes.

**Amy:** It's really, really crazy. Um, definitely worth checking out. And, um, we have had experience with a really severe forest fire in our city. Right? Do you remember when it was?

**Curtis:** It was in 2003.

**Amy:** So that was...12...12 years ago?

**Curtis:** 12 years ago, and...

**Amy:** What happened?

**Curtis:** That one was started by lightning...

**Amy:** Yeah.

**Curtis:** ...as well.

**Amy:** Dry conditions. It was the...like this is the driest summer in 50 years, but before this summer, 2003 was the driest summer.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** So the conditions are the same, but a little bit worse this year.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** So anyway, the same thing happened. It was a lightning strike, there was a really windy day.

**Curtis:** The next day.

**Amy:** Yeah. For a couple days, we had really bad winds. And this one was called the Okanagan Mountain Park fire.

**Curtis:** Yes.

**Amy:** Because it started in that park. And anyway, it grew really, really quickly. They couldn't control it because of the winds.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** And the, ah, the trees were doing what we call candling. So what it means is the one tree is on fire, and then it **hops**<sup>8</sup> to another tree, and it's like the tree is lit on fire in seconds.

**Curtis:** Almost instantly.

**Amy:** Yeah. And it creates this massive flame. And I remember watching this fire from...from my grandma's house on the deck, because she's up on the mountain a little bit.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** And I remember seeing the trees candling from that fire, and it looked really close. Because at night you can't see the...you don't have the depth perception, you can't see how far it is.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** And apparently, when we read the next day in the news, those flames that we were seeing were 400 feet high.

**Curtis:** Wow.

**Amy:** So obviously they looked close that night because they were so big, but it was really scary. And that same night the...the fire came towards, it moved north, and it came towards the neighbourhood that is close to the forest, right?

**Curtis:** Yeah, and it actually burned people's houses down.

**Amy:** Houses. Yeah. People...people lost their homes. There were 53 people that lost their homes in this fire.

**Curtis:** Yeah, the people weren't in their homes, they got evacuated.

**Amy:** They were evacuated, and all of the animals are evacuated too, because it was in the outskirts of town, and...and a lot of farms are there, people that have **livestock**<sup>9</sup>, right.

**Curtis:** Right.

**Amy:** Things like horses and cows, and things like that. So they had to bring all of...all of those animals, and all of the people were evacuated. Um, they actually evacuated the whole lower Mission, which was like...it's a neighbourhood, but it's a huge area, and it would be very unlikely the fire would go that far, but always make sure that everybody's safe. And, um, where do you go when you're evacuated? What's the process?

**Curtis:** They set up emergency relief centres almost...

**Amy:** Yeah, usually in churches...

**Curtis:** Or schools.

**Amy:** Yeah, schools. You know, buildings. And you have to go check in, and then they encourage you to try and stay with people you know within the city, and if you have nowhere to go, then they try to find a hotel.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** And that's sort of what they do.

**Curtis:** Do you remember all the smoke?

**Amy:** Oh, the smoke was so thick, ugh, it was disgusting.

**Curtis:** We live in a valley so it just kind of hung there.

**Amy:** It looked foggy.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** Except there were flakes of ash and...

**Curtis:** Oh, yeah.

**Amy:** ...and it was very...oh, it was just like a campfire, it...the whole air, like every breath, you could smell campfire. And I anticipated that this fire that's happening right now is going to create the same results. But there's a bit of a breeze.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** Which isn't helping the fire, but it's keeping the smoke moving.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** So...yeah, anyway, so this is our experience with forest fires. And we hope that you...you found this interesting, and maybe you'll understand what they are and how they affect people a little bit more. And we've got the Real English tip coming up.

#### Real English Conversational Tip

**Amy:** Alright. So for the Real English tip today, we have another funny name that...that you might hear someone being called.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** What is it?

**Curtis:** Looky loo.

**Amy:** Okay. And what does a looky loo do?

**Curtis:** Okay. Where there's something like a forest fire happening.

**Amy:** Or maybe a really bad car accident.

**Curtis:** Or a bad storm.

**Amy:** Yeah. Some sort of disaster.

**Curtis:** Yes.

**Amy:** The people that stand and they really want to watch the action.

**Curtis:** Um-hum.

**Amy:** That are standing on the side of the road.

**Curtis:** Those...those are looky loos.

**Amy:** Yeah. And what do looky loos do sometimes? Because they want to look and they want to see what's happening... But what ends up happening?

**Curtis:** Well, they get in the way.

**Amy:** Yeah.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** So, for example sometimes the...in our area, with the air planes and helicopters that are coming to scoop water...

**Curtis:** Yes.

**Amy:** ...out of the lake, there'll be people in boats that are trying to get a view of the fire...

**Curtis:** Um-hum.

**Amy:** ...and they're getting in the way of the people that are trying to fight the fire.

**Curtis:** And put it out.

**Amy:** That's right. So we say don't be a looky loo. Get out of the way.

**Curtis:** So if you guys haven't visited our website yet to become a free member, you can do that by coming to [RealEnglishConversations.com](http://RealEnglishConversations.com). And you will get free sounds and words that native speakers use everyday. There's 31 of them.

**Amy:** Yeah, and we also have three conversations that are on the website that come with a full audio transcript. So it can help you, you know, practise reading while you're listening at the same time. It's a really good way to start making connections with words that maybe you recognize on...on paper when you're reading it, but you're not quite recognizing it when you're hearing it.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Amy:** So, anyway, come to our website. It doesn't cost anything.

**Curtis:** No.

**Amy:** Obviously, free member, at [RealEnglishConversations.com](http://RealEnglishConversations.com). And we'll see you guys next time.

**Curtis:** See ya.

**Lightning strikes<sup>1a</sup> lightning bolt<sup>1b</sup>** – both of these terms refer to lightning.

- There were hundreds of lightning strikes during the thunderstorm.
- The lightning bolts were really visible after it dark.

**something like that<sup>2</sup>** – a common statement in conversational English that can be used if you do not know the specific details or facts of something.

- The meeting is at 2 in the afternoon or something like that.

**evacuate<sup>3</sup>** – To leave an area because of a safety reason.

- The hurricane forced the residents on the oceanfront of Miami to evacuate.
- They evacuated the apartment building when one of the units had a fire.

**Mother Nature<sup>4</sup>** – This refers to the forces of nature such as fires, storms, tornados etc. It is used in way to describe a higher power, sort of like a spiritual force or a god, personifying the forces of nature.

- Mother nature's way of cleaning the forest is to have forest fires.
- Mother nature is always fighting against humanity and the pollution we create on her planet.

**fuelled<sup>5</sup>** – to fuel. This verb is used to mean give something energy or the fuel needed to propel something or someone. In the conversation we said the wind was fuelling the fire because fire becomes stronger with blowing air.

- Fuelled by her fear of being chased, she out ran the person attacking her.
- The controversy was fuelled by the questions the journalists were asking.

**squared<sup>6</sup>** – English error. We realized that we should have been saying 1000 square meters rather than 1000 squared meters. Although, it is very common to hear 'squared' when we are talking about these types of measurements in English.

**reignite<sup>7</sup>** – to relight, to start a fire again. Reignite, ignite or relight can be used in a figurative sense in relationships to have renewed interest or passion in a relationship.

- They thought the fire was out but it reignited during a strong wind storm.
- After 10 years of marriage the couple decided to reignite their love for each other by doing activities they did when they first met.

**hops<sup>8</sup>** – to hop. To travel or move from one place to another. The literal sense means to do a series of small jumps.

- Hop into my car and we will go downtown for the night.
- The bird hopped across the front lawn chasing the worm he wanted to eat.

**livestock<sup>9</sup>** – a general term for talking about farm animals such as cows, pigs, horses etc.

- There is typically more livestock in the rural areas or the outskirts of the cities.
- The farm had a lot of livestock and a large field where they grew hay and alfalfa.

## Practice Exercises

### True or False

Decide if the statements below are true (correct) or false (not true or incorrect)

1. Forest fires are always started naturally
2. Sometimes helicopters & airplanes help to fight forest fires.
3. The winter time is when fire season starts.
4. When a fire is close to where people live they might have to be evacuated.
5. People can be careless when they have campfires.

### Fill in the Blank

Using the Vocabulary from the lesson notes section, decide which word completes these sentences below.

- Hop
- Fuelled
- Livestock
- Square
- Reignite

1. \_\_\_\_\_ also needs to be evacuated when they are in danger from a forest fire.
2. The size of the fire last year was over 1000 \_\_\_\_\_ meters.
3. During a forest fire the flames can \_\_\_\_\_ from tree to tree.
4. Fires is \_\_\_\_\_ by winds.
5. If the fire fighters don't do a good job there is a risk the fire might \_\_\_\_\_ again.

### Writing Exercise

Forest Fires are caused naturally or by people in different parts of the world. In a few sentences try to explain the types of things that are done to put the fire out and to keep people and animals safe.

Answers for True or False

1. False
2. True
3. False
4. True
5. True

Answers for Fill in the Blank

1. Livestock
2. Square
3. Hop
4. Fuelled
5. Reignite