

Businesses Offer Support to Fire Victims

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Businessmen lined up on Monday to offer high-profile assistance to victims of wildfires and to "take on patronage" of the villages devastated by the blazes.

Industrialists including Oleg Deripaska, Vladimir Potanin and Leonid Mikhelson offered the services of their companies in an answer to President Dmitry Medvedev's call for businesses to join the relief effort.

Deripaska said his RusAl would build 200 houses in the Nizhny Novgorod region. "We decided to take on the patronage of these villages in order to follow how their reconstruction will go over the next three to four years," Deripaska said at a meeting chaired by Medvedev.

The president threw his weight behind the initiative as well.

"You used a very precise term. It's, perhaps, a little Soviet, but there's nothing bad about that. This is exactly patronage. That is what it was called earlier when large companies, which had the wherewithal, took on suffering communities and offered a patron's help to rebuild, to create normal living conditions," Medvedev said.

He added that the companies should also try to create new jobs for the suffering communities.

Novatek chairman Leonid Mikhelson said his company would build 25 homes in the Nizhny Novgorod region and 25 in Mordovia.

For his part, Interros president Vladimir Potanin reminded the group that those volunteering to help extinguish the fires also needed support.

"Whoever needs machinery, whoever needs supplies, I'm ready to make an investment," he said.

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