

Ministry Fights Forest Fires With Crosses

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The  **Moscow Times**

The Krasnoyarsk branch of the Emergency Situations Ministry has turned to two-meter-tall Orthodox crosses to fight fires raging across Siberian forests.

The 25 crosses were donated by the local office of the Russian Orthodox Church and sent Friday to the areas worst hit by the fires, the Boguchansky and Kezhemsky districts, RIA-Novosti reported, citing a local ministry spokeswoman.

The crosses, each with a nailed icon portraying Kupina Neopalimaya, or the Lady of the Burning Bush, who is thought to offer protection from fires, will be installed in local churches, Komsomolskaya Pravda [reported](#).

In addition, four icons will be placed in the four corners of each town, with a fifth one in the center, news site NewsLab.ru reported.

The initiative was launched by the Orthodox Church, which contacted the ministry and signed a contract in 2010, when Russia saw the worst forest fires in decades, the ministry said in a [statement](#).

"Any initiatives from our citizens, even those that are not scientifically proven, are only welcome," Yelena Smirnykh, a Moscow-based ministry spokeswoman, said by telephone.

She said she was not aware of other instances where the church had provided spiritual assistance for natural disasters. "It shows that people are not indifferent," she said.

Countrywide, about 130 fires were burning over 182 hectares on Friday, the ministry [said](#). Besides the Krasnoyarsk region, major forest fires were raging in the Zabaikalsky and Irkutsk regions and the Komi and Buryatia republics.

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