

Moscow Air Pollution Hit Danger Level Over Holiday

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Fires in the Moscow region caused pollution levels to rise in the capital over the weekend. Above, smog caused by fires near a village in the Ryazan region in 2010. **Maxim Stulov**

Air pollution exceeded permissible levels in Moscow during the extended May Day holiday weekend because of fires in the Moscow region, a city official said Wednesday.

"Over the holidays, maximum pollutant concentrations exceeded the permissible standards for carbon monoxide by 1.2 times, nitrogen oxide by 1.3 times, and airborne particles by 1.2 times," said Alexei Popikov, the top specialist with Moscow Environmental Monitoring, a municipal agency, Interfax reported.

He linked the jump in pollutants to dry grass fires and backyard waste incineration by families in the Moscow region, saying the smoke was driven into the capital by unfavorable weather conditions.

When air pollution exceeds allowable levels, experts urge people to stay indoors and, if they are suffering from respiratory ailments, to wear surgical masks, which are available

at drugstores.

But Popikov said Moscow residents should have nothing to worry about in the upcoming days thanks to a change in weather that has cleared the air. The temperature dropped to 3 degrees Celsius amid strong winds on Tuesday night and is forecast to remain in the teens until the weekend, when rain showers are expected.

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