

State of Emergency Declared Due to Fires in Eastern Regions

June 18, 2012



A Moscow region forest burning during wildfires in summer 2010

Authorities on Monday declared a state of emergency in seven federal subjects in Russia's eastern and far eastern territories as forest fires continue to rage.

Emergency restrictions are now in place in the whole of the Khanty-Mansiisk autonomous district and Tyva republic, as well as parts of the Sakha republic and the Krasnoyarsk, Amur, Zabaikalsky and Sakhalin regions, the Federal Forestry Agency's press service told Interfax.

"The main cause of forest fires in these regions is grass burning for agricultural purposes, as well as storms and irresponsible handling of fires by citizens visiting forests," the press service said, adding that special fire-prevention regimes, which prohibit visiting wooded areas, have been imposed throughout a further 11 federal subjects.

As of Monday morning, there were 198 forest fires burning across Russia. The active fires don't yet threaten any populated areas or economically significant projects, Interfax reported, citing forestry agency data.

In terms of land ravaged by fires, this year has already been more severe than 2010, when drought in western Russia caused wildfires that brought choking smog to Moscow, Grigory Kuksin, head of Greenpeace Russia's wildfire program, said last week.

This year, areas closer to Europe have had plenty of rain, while Siberia has been dry because of an anti-cyclone, Kuksin said.

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