

Wildfires endanger villages, fuel site, in Russia's Siberia

August 7 2021, by Vladimir Isachenkov



Firefighters and volunteers have a briefing as they work at the scene of forest fire at Gorny Ulus area west of Yakutsk, in Russia, Saturday, Aug. 7, 2021. Wildfires in Russia's vast Siberia region endangered several villages Saturday and prompted authorities to evacuate residents of some areas. In northeastern Siberia, 93 active forest fires burned across 1.1 million hectares (2.8 million acres) of Sakha-Yakutia, officials said, making it the worst affected region of

Russia. Credit: AP Photo/Ivan Nikiforov

Wildfires in Russia's vast Siberia region endangered a dozen villages Saturday and prompted authorities to evacuate some residents.

In northeastern Siberia, 93 active forest fires burned across 1.1 million hectares (2.8 million acres) of Sakha-Yakutia, officials said, making it the worst affected region of Russia.

A [fire](#) engulfed dozens of houses in the village of Byas-Kuel, and all village residents were evacuated, according to the local task force dealing with the emergency.

Fires also burned close to the villages of Kytyl-Dyura, Sinsk and Yedyai, and the local government chief, Andrei Tarasenko, said that a total of 12 settlements are currently under threat. High winds exacerbated the danger of flames spreading quickly.

In the [village](#) of Sangar, emergency teams were taking urgent steps to protect a threatened fuel supply facility. Emergency officials prepared to engage a heavy-lift plane to douse the flames.

In recent years, Russia has recorded high temperatures that many scientists regard as a result of climate change. The [hot weather](#) coupled with the neglect of fire safety rules has caused a growing number of fires.

Experts also blame the worsening situation with fires on a 2007 decision to disband a federal aviation network tasked to spot and combat fires and turn its assets to regional authorities. The much-criticized move led to the force's [rapid decline](#).



Firefighters work at the scene of forest fire at Gorny Ulus area west of Yakutsk, in Russia, Saturday, Aug. 7, 2021. Wildfires in Russia's vast Siberia region endangered several villages Saturday and prompted authorities to evacuate residents of some areas. In northeastern Siberia, 93 active forest fires burned across 1.1 million hectares (2.8 million acres) of Sakha-Yakutia, officials said, making it the worst affected region of Russia. Credit: AP Photo/Ivan Nikiforov



In this file photo taken on Monday, Aug. 2, 2021, Smoke from forest fires is seen over small town of Kysyl-Syr, Vilyuysky District, Sakha Republic also known as Yakutia, Russia Far East. Wildfires in Russia's vast Siberia region are endangering several villages and prompted evacuations and other emergency precautions. Officials said 93 active forest fires burned across 1.1 million hectares (2.8 million acres) of Sakha-Yakutia in northeastern Siberia. Credit: AP Photo/Nikolay Petrov, File



In this handout photo released by Russian Defense Ministry Press Service, a Russian military engineer of the Eastern Military District extinguishes forest fires in Sakha Republic also known as Yakutia, Russia Far East, on Saturday, Aug. 7, 2021. Wildfires in Russia's vast Siberia region are endangering several villages and prompted evacuations and other emergency precautions. Officials said 93 active forest fires burned across 1.1 million hectares (2.8 million acres) of Sakha-Yakutia in northeastern Siberia. Credit: Russian Defense Ministry Press Service via AP



Firefighters rest after working at the scene of forest fire at Gorny Ulus area west of Yakutsk, in Russia, Saturday, Aug. 7, 2021. Wildfires in Russia's vast Siberia region endangered several villages Saturday and prompted authorities to evacuate residents of some areas. In northeastern Siberia, 93 active forest fires burned across 1.1 million hectares (2.8 million acres) of Sakha-Yakutia, officials said, making it the worst affected region of Russia. Credit: AP Photo/Ivan Nikiforov



In this photo released by the Russian Defense Ministry Press Service, a military transport aircraft prepares to assist in extinguishing a fire on the territory of the Mordovian Republic Natural Reserve in Russia, Friday, Aug. 6, 2021. Credit: Russian Defense Ministry Press Service via AP



Russian President Vladimir Putin looks through a helicopter's window watching a damage from wildfires in the Chelyabinsk Region, Russia, Friday, Aug. 6, 2021. Credit: Alexei Nikolsky, Sputnik, Kremlin Pool Photo via AP

The forests that cover huge areas of Russia make spotting new fires a challenge.

On Friday, Russian President Vladimir Putin boarded a helicopter to overfly an area that was affected by wildfires in the Chelyabinsk region in the Ural Mountains. Putin later chaired a meeting with top officials to discuss the situation.

Emergencies Minister Yevgeny Zinichev reported that over 11,000 forest fires have ravaged an area of more than 6 million hectares (14.8

million acres) so far this year. Nearly 90,000 emergency workers were engaged in fighting wildfires.

Yakutia government head Aysen Nikolayev said acrid smoke from wildfires has engulfed many cities and villages, including Mirnyi, where heavy firefighting planes are based. The planes have been grounded since July 29, forcing authorities to rely on helicopters and ground personnel, he said.

"We haven't had practically any rains for 2 1/2 months, with abnormally hot and dry weather and [high winds](#)," Nikolayev said. "In some regions, people have suffered serious discomfort because of thick smoke."

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Citation: Wildfires endanger villages, fuel site, in Russia's Siberia (2021, August 7) retrieved 10 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-08-wildfires-endanger-villages-fuel-site.html>

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