

Siberian heatwave: Wildfires rage in Arctic, sea ice melts

24 July 2020



This image taken from video provided by Russian Emergency Ministry, shows a Russian Emergency Ministry multipurpose amphibious aircraft releasing water to extinguish the fire in the Trans-Baikal National Park in Buryatia, southern Siberia, Russia, Thursday, July 9, 2020. About 910 hectares of forest were alight over this area of the Russia's region, according to the ministry of emergency situations. (Russian Emergency Ministry Press Service via AP)

The U.N. weather agency warned Friday that average temperatures in Siberia were 10 degrees Celsius (18 Fahrenheit) above average last month, a spate of exceptional heat that has fanned devastating fires in the Arctic Circle and contributed to a rapid depletion in ice sea off Russia's Arctic coast.

"The Arctic is heating more than twice as fast as the global average, impacting local populations and ecosystems and with global repercussions," World Meteorological Organization Secretary-General Petteri Taalas said in a statement Friday.

He noted that Earth's poles influence weather conditions far away, where hundreds of millions of people live.

WMO previously cited a reading of 38 Celsius in

the Russian town of Verkhoyansk on June 20, which the agency has been seeking to verify as a possible record-high temperature in the Arctic Circle. It comes as fires have swept through the region, with satellite imagery showing the breadth of the area surface.

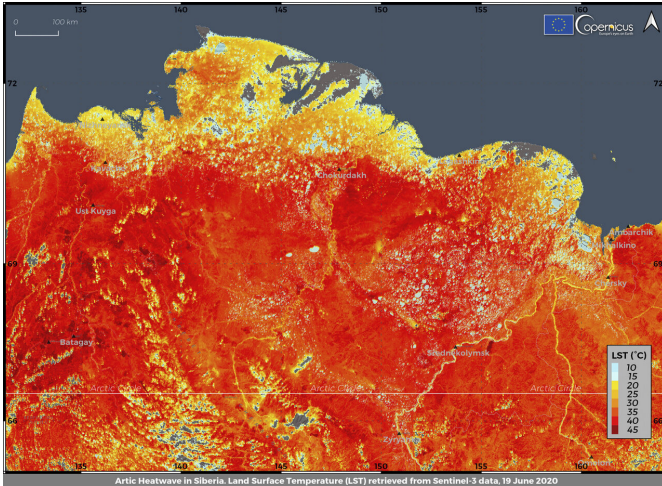
The agency says the extended heat is linked to a large "blocking pressure system" and northward swing of the jet stream that has injected warm air into the region. But WMO also pointed to a recent study by top climate scientists who found that such a rise in heat would have been nearly impossible without human-caused climate change.

WMO said information collected by the U.S. National Snow and Ice Data Center and the U.S. National Ice Center showed the Siberian heat wave had "accelerated the ice retreat along the Arctic Russian coast, in particular since late June, leading to very low sea ice extent in the Laptev and Barents Seas."



This image taken from video provided by Russian Emergency Ministry, shows a Russian Emergency Ministry's Beriev plane BE-200 Be-200 multipurpose amphibious aircraft releases water extinguishing in the Trans-Baikal National Park in Buryatia, southern Siberia, Russia, Friday, July 10, 2020. A summer heatwave across Siberia has spread the area of forestfires, with Irkutsk region northbound on Lake Baikal experiencing at

least 50 fires, Russian state television reported Friday. According to Greenpeace, three million hectares of forest are currently under fire in Siberia. (Russian Emergency Ministry Press Service via AP)



This photo taken on Friday, June 19, 2020 and provided by ECMWF Copernicus Climate Change Service shows the land surface temperature in the Siberia region of Russia. A record-breaking temperature of 38 degrees Celsius (100.4 degrees Fahrenheit) was registered in the Arctic town of Verkhoyansk on Saturday, June 20 in a prolonged heatwave that has alarmed scientists around the world. (ECMWF Copernicus Climate Change Service via AP)

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