

# Doctors Say Heat Will Boost Suicides, Diabetes

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August 17, 2010



Putin speaking at an awards ceremony for Russian and foreign firefighters as Shoigu looks on at the Ramenskoye airfield outside Moscow on Tuesday. **Alexei Druzhinin**

Toxic smoke wafted into a rain-soaked Moscow on Tuesday as doctors warned that this summer's disastrous heat wave could drive more people to alcohol and suicide.

Firefighters announced that they had halved the number of wildfires ravaging forests in central Russia, and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin handed out personalized watches inscribed with his name at a thank-you ceremony for foreign firefighters who pitched in to help battle the flames.

Smoke could pollute Moscow's air for the rest of the week, weather forecasters said, despite Tuesday's rain showers and a drop in the temperature to 26 degrees Celsius. A cold front that swept through northwestern Russia on Sunday night was bearing down on Moscow, bringing with it hurricane-force winds.

This summer's record heat wave, which ignited wildfires that blanketed Moscow in thick smog earlier this month, doubled the number of deaths in the city to 700 a day and is expected to cause health problems, including diabetes, for Muscovites later this year, doctors said.

"That heat has affected all the organs, including the respiratory and endocrine systems, and we should expect more cases of diabetes, suicide and alcohol-related nervous breakdowns," said Boris Revich, a senior demography and environmental researcher at the Russian Academy of Sciences, RIA-Novosti reported.

He said official data have not been released yet but noted that children and pregnant women have been particularly affected by the heat.

Over the past few weeks, more than 6,000 people have turned to psychologists at the Emergency Situations Ministry, said Yulia Shoigu, chief of the ministry's psychological assistance department.

"Mostly people were feeling stress and fears related to the fire," said Shoigu, a daughter of Emergency Situations Minister Sergei Shoigu, Interfax reported.

Moscow's City Hall said it would scrap two major events connected with Sept. 4 celebrations to mark the 863rd anniversary of the founding of Moscow so that the funds could be diverted to health care.

"No solemn theatrical show will be held on Sept. 4 for City Day's opening celebrations," Sergei Tsoi, spokesman for Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, told reporters.

He said a dinner on behalf of the mayor, Moscow's government and the City Duma was canceled, too.

Instead, Moscow plans to spend the money on "social problems and the health care of Muscovites," Tsoi said, without elaborating.

When reached by phone, a spokesman in the Mayor's Office declined to say whether the changes were linked to the smog.

Tsoi said the decision to scale down City Day was made last week.

The Emergency Situations Ministry trumpeted significant progress in extinguishing fires in the Voronezh and Nizhny Novgorod regions as well as the republic of Mordovia, and said fires nationwide were reduced to 22,700 hectares, compared with 45,800 hectares Monday.

Fires in the Moscow region fell to 33.6 hectares, compared with 46.6 hectares a day earlier, the ministry said in a statement. About 14 forest and peat bog fires were still burning east and southeast of the capital.

Putin thanked foreign and Russian firefighters during a ceremony at the Ramenskoye airfield in the Moscow region. "When disaster came to our doorstep, we didn't have to ask anyone for help and support," Putin said.

More than a dozen countries have contributed a total of 515 firefighters and 96 pieces of

equipment to fight the fires. Aircraft came from seven countries — Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Italy, France and Turkey — while four countries — Bulgaria, Latvia, Estonia and Poland — sent rescue teams. Others, like Germany, Spain and the United States, have provided experts, Putin said, adding that Russia was grateful to everyone.

Putin said foreign teams had made 230 "combat flights," and presented watches to 19 pilots inscribed with his and their names. Putin also piloted a firefighting plane over the Ryazan region last week.

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