

Trains and Planes Fight Wildfires in Altai

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A Be-200ChS firefighting plane dumping water during a flight at a Black Sea air show in Gelendzhik on Thursday. Five aircraft were dispatched to fight fires in the Altai region. **Ilya Naymushin**

Five firefighting trains and five aircraft tackled fast-spreading wildfires in the Altai region, fanned by a wind that sent the flames advancing at 100 kilometers per hour.

But the efforts bore little fruit, with the total area covered by wildfires nationwide increasing by 40 times in 24 hours, to 6,640 hectares, with 6,500 hectares in Altai and the rest in the Novosibirsk region, the Emergency Situations Ministry said Thursday, Interfax reported.

No injuries have been reported in the Altai fires, which started across the border in northern Kazakhstan and have killed five people there. However, about 1,200 Russians have been left homeless after the blazes destroyed 334 homes, mostly in the village of Nikolayevka.

President Dmitry Medvedev spoke by telephone with Kazakh leader Nursultan Nazarbayev on Thursday "to discuss practical steps to fight fires in the two nations' border regions," the Kremlin said.

The Emergency Situations Ministry said it has sent firefighting aircraft over the border into

Kazakhstan to help local officials fight the blazes.

Altai Region Governor Alexander Karlin declared a state of emergency in the republic, where 1,300 people were fighting the flames on Thursday, RIA-Novosti said.

The wind subsided later in the day, allowing two helicopters and three planes to be dispatched to combat the fires.

Those left homeless have received 10,000 rubles (\$325) to cover their immediate needs and will receive 200,000 rubles more, the Altai government's press service said, [RIA-Novosti reported](#). The rebuilding of destroyed homes is to start next week.

Regional prosecutors, acting on Medvedev's orders, opened an investigation into the activities of local officials responsible for fire prevention, Interfax reported. Emergency Situations Minister Sergei Shoigu said earlier this week that a slow response from fire officials was to blame for devastating wildfires that ravaged central Russia this summer.

The latest wave of wildfires — the third to hit Russia this year — still threatens nine of the 12 regions of the Siberian Federal District, the Emergency Situations Ministry said Thursday.

Weather forecasters have promised rain in Altai in the coming days.

Editor's note: Alexander Karlin is governor of the Altai region, where the village of Nikolayevka is located. An earlier version of this article said Karlin was governor of the Altai republic and that the village was located there. The region and republic are separate areas.

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