

Wildfires Hit Zabaikalsky Town

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Firefighters putting out a blaze in the Moscow region 2010. **Andrei Makhonin**

Firefighters battled blazes across Siberia on Wednesday, and flames reached the Zabaikalsky town of Nizhny Tsasuchei, prompting residents to evacuate.

Fires fed by strong steppe winds have been raging in the southern part of Zabaikalsky region since last week, when 20 houses were destroyed in the village of Onon-Baza near the Mongolian border.

On Wednesday, flames arrived in the town of Nizhny Tsasuchei, which has 630 houses and 3,372 residents, a regional Emergency Situations Ministry spokesperson told RIA-Novosti. The spokesperson said eight fire trucks were working to put out the fire.

Ninety-one fires covering an area of 8,357 hectares have been put out in the Zabaikalsky and Novosibirsk regions and in Buryatia since Tuesday, said a spokesperson for the Siberian Federal District forest service, Interfax reported. The spokesperson said firefighters continued to battle 71 fires covering 5,720 hectares in the Siberian regions.

Wildfires could endanger over 12,000 cities, towns and villages in the coming year,

an Emergency Situations Ministry forecaster said last week. The Sverdlovsk, Chelyabinsk, Tyumen, Omsk and Amur regions are under particular threat, he said.

Wildfires affected 1.67 million hectares of land last year, according to the Emergency Situations Ministry, and 2.45 million in 2010, when smog from burning forests and peat bogs blanketed Moscow.

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