

Rescue Workers Advise Chukotka Residents to Wear Sunglasses

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The Emergency Situations Ministry's press service issued a statement warning Chukotka residents in the Arctic not to leave their homes without donning sunglasses to avoid going blind from sunlight reflecting off the snow.

The ministry explained that snow blindness — a problem to which people are especially prone when cloud cover causes a scattering of light that makes sky, snow and ice all appear white — is caused by ultraviolet rays of sunlight reflecting off snow crystals and injuring the eyes, Interfax reported Tuesday.

Under such conditions, people strain their vision to its limits, rescuers said, thus diminishing natural protective mechanisms that limit the amount of reflected ultraviolet rays that reach the eye.

Glasses with colored, filtered lenses offer the best protection against sun blindness. Most

researchers working in the Arctic and Antarctic prefer a smoky tint because it reduces brightness without compromising the perception of detail.

Rescue workers said that snow blindness begins with symptoms of diminished perception of varying surface levels, followed by a feeling of irritation similar to as if sand got into your eyes. By evening, unbearable cramps set in. The eyes become inflamed, the eyelids swell and the victim is no longer able to see.

The ministry recommended that anyone suffering from mild sun blindness lie down for 20 minutes with a warm, damp cloth over their eyes, or if symptoms are severe, spend up to two days in a dark room.

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