

Emergencies Ministry Sends Volunteers to Far East as Water Rises

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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An Emergency Situations Ministry helicopter transported about 50 volunteers to the Far East on Sunday as the region continues to battle the aftermath of torrential flooding.

Forty-seven volunteers and 50 rescuers from the Russian Union of Rescuers will join those already on the ground to help build a dam to protect a district in Komsomolsk-na-Amur, Interfax reported.

Several hundred people — including soldiers, volunteers and rescue workers — are currently working day and night to secure the area, though strong winds have made matters worse, with the water level rising Sunday.

As of 8 p.m. local time, the level of the Amur River had climbed 2 centimeters to 910 centimeters, the regional branch of the Emergency Situations Ministry reported.

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev announced Thursday that he would head a new government commission for the development of Russia's Far East following the record floods, which affected several regions.

"It is about the development of the whole area, not just the elimination of the disaster's aftermath. Of course, one thing is impossible without the other," Medvedev said during a Cabinet meeting Thursday.

The country's vast Far East has been in the spotlight in recent weeks after the massive floods, which meteorologists have called the worst in 120 years. The disaster, which led to the evacuation of tens of thousands of people, prompted President Vladimir Putin earlier this week to appoint a new Far East development minister, Alexander Galushka, replacing Viktor Ishayev, who was dismissed last month after the president criticized him as ineffective.

Medvedev called on government officials to work on the flood problem so that such disasters could be handled more effectively in the future. But it was not immediately clear how Medvedev's new Far East commission's responsibilities would be shared with the ministry in charge of the territory as well as the newly appointed presidential envoy to the Far East, Yury Trutnev, a former Putin aide who is now the deputy prime minister responsible the region.

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