

Moscow Ready to Use Cloud Clearing Techniques on Victory Day

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Moscow authorities could resort to cloud-seeding techniques in an effort to ensure blue skies on May 9 when the capital's residents traditionally flock to the streets to celebrate Victory Day, a senior meteorologist said Tuesday.

Silver iodide, liquid nitrogen or cement particles can be released from planes into clouds, causing water molecules to coagulate and clouds to release their precipitation before they reach Moscow, meteorological center chief Roman Vulfand said at a press conference, Interfax reported.

Vulfand said the technique worked in 50-60 percent of cases but would not guarantee clear skies in the event of a last-minute change in weather conditions such as a warm weather front arriving.

Last year Moscow authorities said they would spend almost \$4 million on "meteorological

protection" for the city during the May holidays. Vilfand did not say how much would be spent this year.

Vilfand said that "cloud dehydration" techniques do not present a threat to people's health or the environment.

However, if a mishap from six years ago is anything to go by, people's property might be at risk.

An attempt to guarantee a rainless Russia Day in 2008 went wrong when a 25 kilogram sack of cement that was dropped from a plane failed to pulverize, speeding down to earth in one piece and destroying a home in a Moscow suburb, according to Reuters.

No one was injured as a result of the accident and the homeowner received 50,000 rubles (\$1,400) in compensation, Interfax reported.

Russia commonly uses cloud-seeding techniques to control weather conditions on the most important national holidays.

Similar practices were used in the 1980s when a weather-engineering program was designed to limit snowfall over Moscow, ecologist Valery Stasenکو told the BBC. The program was later scrapped under then-President Mikhail Gorbachev due to budget cuts, Stasenکو said.

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