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At Least 10 Dead After Fire at Siberian Munitions Factory

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The explosion at the munitions factory appeared to have been caused by a forest fire.

A wildfire raging in Siberia caused an explosion at a munitions depot, killing at least 10 people and leading to the temporary closure of a section of the Trans-Siberian Railroad, news reports have said.

Rescuers found a burnt-out truck with the bodies of 10 people, including two soldiers and eight civilians, at the munitions depot near Bolshaya Tura village in the Zabaikalsky region, Defense Ministry spokesman Major General Igor Konashenkov was quoted as saying by Interfax on Wednesday.

The Health Ministry said that 26 people had been injured, of whom 11 were hospitalized, Interfax reported.

The explosion appeared to have been caused by a forest fire that has engulfed nearly 69,000 hectares of land across Siberia.

"A flash-like spread of the flames from the forest to the territory of the depot" cut off employees from an escape route, Konashenkov was quoted as saying. A commanding officer tried to evacuate the employees on a depot truck, which became caught up in the explosion, he said.

The blaze had been extinguished by Wednesday morning, Deputy Defense Minister Dmitry Bulgakov said, Interfax reported.

The railroad operator said trains between Chita and Karymskaya on the Trans-Siberian Railroad had been temporarily stopped for "security reasons," but that they were running again by Wednesday morning, Interfax reported.

The railway links Russia's western regions with Far Eastern ports and serves as an export route for Russian commodities and carries supplies of grains and metals.

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