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Christian Icons Protect Against Fires, Russian Official Says

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"In 2012, christian icons saved the entire village from fire," a representative of Russia's Emergency Situations Ministry said to RIA Novosti.

As the Russian Orthodox Church marked a holiday for firefighters, a representative of Russia's Emergency Situations Ministry praised religious icons for their capacity to save lives in the event of a fire.

"In 2012, there was an incident in the Kostroma region, when residents of one village came out [of their homes] during a fire carrying an icon, and the flames didn't damage the village," Viktor Klimkin, head of the ministry's department for supervisory activities and preventative work, was cited as saying by RIA Novosti on Wednesday.

Klimkin's comments came on the national Day of the Unburnt Bush Icon of the Holy Mother, considered the patron saint of firefighters.

To mark the holiday, employees of the Emergency Situations Ministry visit cathedrals, churches and monasteries, where they remember their colleagues who died in the line of duty,

Emergency Minister Vladimir Puchkov was cited as saying.

Employees of the ministry also attended a ceremony led by Archpriest Mikhail Ryazantsev at Moscow's Christ the Savior Cathedral.

After calling for the church's prayer service for firefighters and rescuers to become a yearly tradition to mark the holiday, Ryazantsev praised the work of firefighters and rescuers.

"I'm not bending the truth by saying that today's heroes have all gathered here right now, because the work that you do is heroic," Ryazantsev was cited as saying by RIA Novosti.

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