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One in Nine Fires in Russia are Caused by Arson, Officials Say

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One out of every nine fires registered in Russia was caused by an act of arson, news web site Gazeta.ru reported Tuesday, citing the Emergency Situations deputy minister.

According to Deputy Minister Alexander Chupriyan, the country registered more than 17,500 arson cases last year, leading to the deaths of at least 300 people.

Chupriyan also said the number of arson cases has been increasing with each passing year, Gazeta.ru reported.

For comparison, there were an estimated 282,600 intentional fires in the United States between 2007 and 2011, according to the U.S. National Fire Protection Association. In other words, some 56,000 fires were started as an act of arson per year, the report said.

Between January and September of last year, 109,009 fires were registered in Russia, causing 6,831 deaths and injuries to more than 8,000 people, according to the Emergency Situations Ministry.

Under Russian law, convicted arsonists can be punished by up to five years of community service or prison. Only 10 percent of arson cases ever make it to court, Gazeta.ru reported.

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