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Siberia on Red Alert as Lake Baikal Continues to Dry Up

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Lake Baikal, which is located on the territories of Irkutsk and Buryatia, contains 20 percent of the world's total unfrozen freshwater reserves.

Siberian emergency services remained in a state of red alert on Thursday after the water level in Lake Baikal dropped to a critical low point as the world's largest lake continues to dry up, the federal water agency said.

The world's largest freshwater lake saw its water level drop eight centimeters below the minimum level of 456 meters, the Federal Water Resources Agency said Thursday in an online statement.

Emergency services in the Buryatia republic have been on high alert since Jan. 20 in connection with the declining water levels in Lake Baikal, which is partially located on its territory, Interfax reported.

Nearly 1,000 people living in Buryatia suffered problems with their supply between Feb.13 and March 21 because of the falling water levels, the republic's nature reserve agency said Tuesday

in an online statement.

Despite the drop in water levels, a government order dated Feb. 4 allows the Irkutsk reservoir — which operates in the Irkutsk and Buryatia regions — to continue taking water from the lake, the Federal Water Resources Agency said.

Lake Baikal, which is located on the territories of Irkutsk and Buryatia, contains 20 percent of the world's total unfrozen freshwater reserves and was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1996.

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