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Sprawling Siberia Floods Wreck Young Family's Home

By Reuters

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Svetlana Semyonova, 32, returned to her devastated home after abandoning it last week as a flood was sweeping through the region to find furniture broken, her daughters' Disney wallpaper sodden and debris everywhere.

"It's all destroyed," said Semyonova on Tuesday standing in her children's room, gesturing at a pile of furniture she will have to throw out. She says she will have to gut the house and start from scratch as the family has nowhere else to go.

The fatal floods began late last month amid freak downpours of rain, swamping homes inhabited by 32,000 people in almost 100 settlements as it swept through a swathe of southeastern Siberia, the Emergencies Ministry said on Wednesday.

The head of the ministry said the devastation has killed 20 people, with rescue workers still

searching for 15 missing, the state-run TASS news agency reported.

Svetlana and Arkady Semyonov, 31, bought a plot of land 11 years ago after getting married. They finally finished building the wooden house three years ago and moved in with their two daughters, now 8 and 12.

They borrowed money to decorate it and bought furniture for the children's room. They had just paid off the loan.

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When the water was rising fast last Friday, they sent the children to stay with their grandparents, while they stayed behind to try and rescue household items before the water rose.

Arkady's brother arrived in a car to help, but they had time for just one run. They managed to save the fridge and oven.

Some homes, such as that of Arkady's brother, were swept away in their entirety, carried one and half kilometers away by currents.

Semyonova now has nowhere to work: the kindergarten where she worked has also been flooded. She has been volunteering from the start to help other residents hit by the flood.

"Our grief has united us all," she said. "We need to be together, to help people so we don't starve to death here."

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