

Wildfires Engulf Siberia, Sparking Online Pleas for Help

July 26, 2019



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Huge swathes of Russia have been engulfed in wildfires over the past month, prompting hundreds of social media users to issue a plea to the authorities to step up measures to put out the flames.

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European scientists have [rung the alarm](#) about the 100 and counting “unprecedented” wildfires that have hit Russia's Arctic and Siberia since June. An estimated 2 million hectares of land are currently [burning](#), according to Russia's Aerial Forest Protection Service, roughly comparable in size to the territory of Israel.

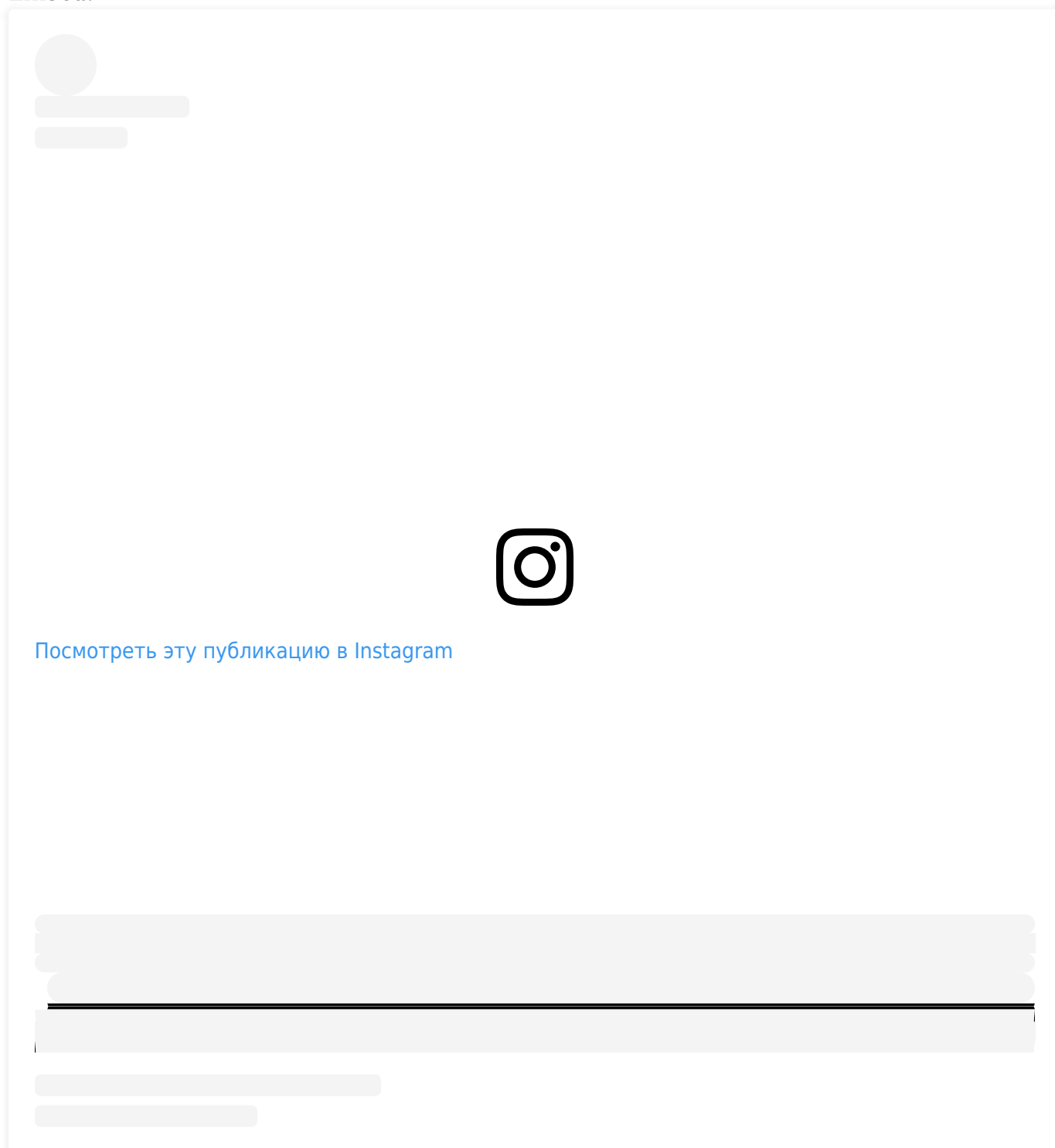
The largest fires — [thought](#) to be triggered by a combination of lightning and human activity — have hit the Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk and Buryatia regions.

Smog has reached major cities including Novosibirsk and Tomsk, The Siberian Times [reported](#) Monday, leading to a rise in complaints about air pollution. President Vladimir Putin's envoy in Siberia [said](#) Thursday that there was no need to declare an emergency unless carbon monoxide concentration exceeds allowable limits.

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Meanwhile, a change.org petition calling on the authorities to declare a state of emergency and step up firefighting efforts has [generated](#) almost 120,000 signatures in less than a week.

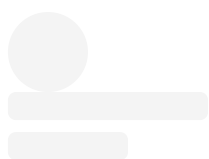
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The hashtag #потушитепожарывсибири (#putoutsiberianwildfires) has been trending on Russian Twitter for days, landing in top spot by early Friday.

“I’m tired of not seeing the sun anymore and not being able to breathe,” a user with the account name @yuxwashere [tweeted](#).

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