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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Governor Fined for Barbecue During Wildfire Season

By AFP

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Alexei Tsydenov, the governor of the republic of Buryatia. **Wikicommons**

The governor of a Siberian region said Tuesday he was fined for holding a barbecue and violating laws his government put in place to prevent forest fires.

Massive blazes have swept through Russia – the world's largest country by landmass – more and more frequently in recent years, particularly impacting Siberia, the Arctic and the Far East.

They are exacerbated by low rainfall and dramatic heat waves that scientists have linked to climate change.

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A post shared by Алексей Цыденов (@tsydenov_aleksey)

"The emergencies ministry fined me for lighting a fire. And there's nothing I can say, they are right," Alexei Tsydenov, the acting head of the republic of Buryatia, wrote on Instagram.

He also posted a photo of the barbecue and of a written fine for 3,000 rubles ($41).

The state-run RIA Novosti news agency said officials in this mountainous region on the coast of Lake Baikal have recorded at least 78 fires spanning more than 1,000 hectares in recent months.

It said law enforcement has doled out more than 1,200 fines over fire safety violations for a combined sum of more than $27,500.

Russia's federal foresty agency has said last year forests spanning more than 9.1 million hectares – an area approximately the size of Portugal – were damaged by blazes.

The international environmental advocacy group Greenpeace says those statistics are a low estimate and do not take into account other types of fires including in the tundra.

Each summer fires across Russia release huge plumes of noxious smoke that suffocate towns and cities as far as hundreds of kilometers away.

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