The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Siberian Wildfires Spread 17.5% in 24 Hours

July 09, 2021

The fires have been fueled by abnormally high temperatures, historic drought and strong winds. **Russian Aerial Forest Protection Service / TASS**

Wildfires ravaging northeastern Siberia have spread by nearly 70,000 hectares in the past day, marking a 17.5% increase in a single day, the Kommersant business daily reported Friday, citing the regional emergencies ministry.

Some 400,000 hectares of forest are now burning in Russia's republic of Sakha.

Abnormally high temperatures and historic drought as well as strong winds have all contributed to the rapid wildfire spread, Sakha's deputy ecology minister and chief forester Sergei Sivtsev told Kommersant.

Related article: Siberia Forest Fires Fueled by Historic Drought, Heatwave

"For the central regions of the republic, June 2021 became the second driest in the entire

history of observations; the last time such a drought was observed was at the end of the 19th century, in 1888," Sivtsev told Kommersant.

Average June temperatures were 2-5 degrees Celsius above the norm this year in Sakha, Russia's largest region, Kommersant cited Sivtsev as saying. The town of Verkhoyansk, one of the coldest inhabited settlements on earth, saw temperatures hit a blistering 48 C last month.

The bulk of fire extinguishing efforts is being carried out near settlements in the Gorny and Tomponsky districts, with 15 districts affected by the wildfires in total, Kommersant reported. Some 2,800 firefighting personnel and 340 pieces of equipment as well as members of the federal paratrooper firefighting service have been deployed to fight the fires.

The republic of Sakha is especially vulnerable to wildfires as more than 80% of its area is covered by boreal forest known as taiga. During last summer's record-setting wildfire season in Russia, 70% of all forest fires were located there.

Experts have linked warmer, drier weather brought on by climate change to increased likelihood and severity of wildfires. At the same time, the fires contribute to further warming by releasing CO_2 into the atmosphere.

Most of last year's Arctic wildfires that emitted record amounts of CO_2 were located in Russia, the EU's Earth observation program said.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/07/09/siberian-wildfires-spread-175-in-24-hours-a74481