

Russia's 2021 Wildfires Now Largest in Its Recorded History

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The fires have been especially catastrophic in the Siberian republic of Sakha. **Sergei Filinin / TASS**

Russia's 2021 wildfires are already its largest in the history of satellite observations, [burning](#) across 17.08 million hectares of land, the Greenpeace Russia environmental group has [said](#).

The new record beats the previous record set in 2012, when fires burned 17 million hectares of land across Russia, and comes with weeks left to go in a devastating wildfire season.

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Grigory Kuksin, the head of Greenpeace Russia's wildfire unit, linked this year's unprecedented blazes to the intensifying effects of climate change that are making Russia's huge expanses of forest drier, hotter and increasingly prone to wildfires.

“The unprecedented size of fire-damaged areas is partially the result of climate change, and the fires themselves are partly driving climate change,” he said in the group's statement

published Tuesday.

“This is a new reality in which we need to think about the measures that must be urgently taken in our country in order to prevent such disasters in the future, or at least reduce their scale.”

Environmentalists also place the blame for the fires’ rapid spread on Russia’s firefighting policy, which allows regions to ignore blazes if the cost of fighting fires outweighs the expected damages, as well as a widespread lack of funding for extinguishing efforts.

According to [official data](#), some 170 fires are currently burning across Russia, from the Kostroma region in the west to Magadan in the Far East.

Nearly 100 of these fires are located in the republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in northeastern Siberia, the country’s largest and coldest region — the largest of which is [on track](#) to become the largest single wildfire ever recorded in human history.

Siberia’s wildfires alone are now [larger](#) than the rest of the world’s blazes combined.

Experts worry that as Siberia’s wildfires become increasingly severe each year, they will become responsible for a growing amount of carbon emissions that in turn accelerate warming even further. Russia’s 2020 forest fires [emitted](#) a record amount of carbon into the atmosphere.

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