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Russia's 2021 Fire Cover Widest Since Imaging Began – Greenpeace

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Climate crisis is one of the major reasons for fires on such a scale. **Yegor Aleyev / TASS**

Forest fires this year covered the largest area of Russia since satellite imaging began, a Greenpeace expert has said.

In 2021 18.2 million hectares were covered by fire, up from the previous record of 18.1 million hectares in 2012, according to a report from Greenpeace Russia's forest department head Alexei Yaroshenko.

"This year was the most destructive fire year for Russian forests in all the time we have reliable and comparable satellite data for," Yaroshenko told the state-run TASS news agency.

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Climate crisis is one of the major reasons for fires on such a scale, Yaroshenko said. Most of the forest fires this year were in the republic of Sakha, the largest Russian region, after it

experienced a record-breaking drought, which both Yaroshenko and local authorities linked to the climate crisis.

Flawed forestry practices and demographic problems in local villages and towns made the fire situation even worse, Yaroshenko said.

One of Sakha's forest fires this year could have become the largest fire in documented human history, Yaroshenko told The Moscow Times in August.

"The foundation of the next fire season is being laid today already," Yaroshenko said in the report, adding that federal funding for fighting and preventing fires in the regions needs to triple.

Without a rapid inflow of money, "a large-scale catastrophe in Russian taiga forests is guaranteed to happen again," he warned.

Russia is heating up roughly three times faster than Earth as a whole, which makes it especially vulnerable to fires, floods, and extreme temperature fluctuations, according to the latest IPCC Assessment Report.

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