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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Toxic Wildfire Smog Blankets Russia's Far Northeastern City Yakutsk

July 19, 2022

Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). **Russian Emergencies Ministry**

The capital of Russia's Far East republic of Sakha was covered in a thick layer of harmful smog Tuesday as wildfires continued to rampage across the country's eastern regions.

"An excess of the maximum permissible concentrations of three kinds [of air pollutants] was revealed in the city of Yakutsk," Natalya Borisova, the regional representative of federal consumer protection watchdog Rospotrebnadzor, was quoted as saying by local news outlet Sakha Life.

"This is nitrogen dioxide [exceeded] by 1.3 times, as well as a slight increase in suspended particles RM-2.5 and RM-10," said Borisova.

Embed:

Вечерний Якутск еще больше похож на Сайлент Хилл

> Город утонул в смоге.
>
> Фото от подписчика pic.twitter.com/hA7NRxd7Sn
>
> — Yakutsk News (@yakutsk___news) July 19, 2022

She advised local residents to stay indoors to avoid unnecessary exposure to toxic air, particularly during the day.

The smog in Yakutsk, a city of 280,000 located 450 kilometers south of the Arctic Circle, originates from wildfires burning in Sakha's southern districts and the neighboring Khabarovsk region, according to the local officials cited by regional media.

"The smoke will continue until the wind changes direction," local emergencies services chief Nikolai Egorov said during a briefing Monday, according to the Yakutia Media news agency.

In response to the situation, the authorities declared states of emergency in Sakha and the neighboring Khabarovsk region late on Tuesday. The measure should allow the regions to use additional resources to combat wildfires and "avoid repetition of the 2021 crisis," according to the statement by Russia's Federal Forestry Agency.

Last year's wildfires in Russia's northeastern regions affected an area of at least 18.8 million hectares and were deemed "record-breaking" by Greenpeace Russia.

This "catastrophic" situation could be repeated this year if the government doesn't take more active measures in combating the fires, the environmental advocacy group said.

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