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At Least 7 People Killed in Russian Floods – IStories

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Damage from spring floods in Orsk. **Yegor Aleyev / TASS**

At least seven people have been killed in historic flooding that hit the Ural Mountains cities of Orenburg and Orsk this month, independent media has reported, as authorities denied any casualties.

Orenburg is just starting to emerge from some of its worst flooding in almost a century after the nearby Ural River began swelling in early April and reached nearly 12 meters over the weekend. While water levels in the city of 550,000 are gradually receding, local officials warned that rising waters in the Ural River's tributaries continue to threaten some Orenburg neighborhoods and nearby settlements.

The investigative news outlet IStories initially reported this week that five people declared missing by their relatives had been found dead.

Two more bodies were found Wednesday in Orsk, according to IStories. The outlet said the victims were an 81-year-old woman with a disability who had refused to evacuate and her 49-

year-old son, who were both found at their home.

That brought the reported death toll to six in Orsk and one in Orenburg.

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Some of the victims' relatives accuse local authorities of withholding the causes of death to avoid paying damages to their families, IStories said.

It cited an anonymous volunteer for missing persons in Orsk who claimed that the number of victims was higher than those declared missing, saying: "I can't name the exact figure, but it's a lot."

Russia's Emergency Situations Ministry has maintained that no one was killed directly by the floods.

On April 7, when the flood waters started rising rapidly after a dam burst on the Ural River, the Orsk mayor's office said four people had died from unrelated causes.

The western Siberian region of Kurgan — where floods have peaked this week — evacuated 14,300 people from the rising Tobol River, local Governor Vadim Shumkov told President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday.

On Thursday, the Kurgan regional administration warned that the Tobol River had risen to 9.72 meters near the city of Kurgan and up to 11 meters in other parts of the region.

"Don't wait for the water to reach your homes, evacuate early," it said.

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