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Far East Russia's Sakha Declares Wildfire Emergency

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Russian Emergencies Ministry

Authorities in Far East Russia's republic of Sakha (Yakutia) on Tuesday declared a state of emergency due to ongoing wildfires across the region.

More than 40 wildfires were burning in Sakha as of Tuesday morning, according to regional authorities, engulfing a total area of some 830 square kilometers — roughly the size of Berlin or New York.

By declaring a state of emergency, the region will gain access to critical equipment and personnel from the federal government to help local emergency responders and volunteer firefighters battle the blazes.

The move will also unlock "additional measures" to help stop fires that threaten residential and commercial areas, according to the head of Sakha's Aerial Forest Protection Service, Vladimir Leonov.

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Sakha is now the fourth region in the Far East where a state of emergency is currently in place due to wildfires. The other three are the Zabaykalsky and Amur regions, as well as the republic of Buryatia.

Russia's wildfire season officially began in early March. By mid-April, regions in the Far East recorded nearly twice as many fires as they had during the same period last year, with most blazes caused by human negligence.

Besides regions in the Far East, the western Voronezh and Kursk regions, the southern Astrakhan region and the North Caucasus republic of Karachay-Cherkessia were most impacted by wildfires by the end of last month, according to the Earth Touches Me environmental project.

Experts have warned that limited resources for fire prevention and control, along with ongoing practices such as dry grass burning, risk turning this year's wildfire season in Russia into a crisis.

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