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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Wildfires Sweep Through Southwestern Russia

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Emergency crews battle a wildfire in the Rostov region. **Mikhail Sinitsyn / TASS**

Wildfires swept across several regions in southwestern Russia over the weekend, with emergency crews in the Rostov region struggling to contain some 140 blazes that damaged homes and destroyed woodland.

"Strong winds, power line overlaps and careless handling of fire have caused wildfires in several populated areas of the Rostov region," Governor Vasily Golubev said Sunday.

"First responders are on the scene, but gale-force winds are making their work significantly more difficult," he added, noting that no casualties had been reported.

On Monday, Golubev said the fires destroyed 13 homes, and emergency crews were still working to contain at least one fire in the Aksaysky district near Rostov-on-Don, where smoke blanketed the skies.

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Russia's Emergency Situations Ministry said an open-air market caught fire overnight in the town of Aksay, damaging at least 25 pavilions before the flames were extinguished by Monday morning.

In 2023, the Rostov region recorded 3,800 fires covering a total of 196,000 hectares (757 square miles).

Elsewhere, dry weather and unusually high temperatures triggered multiple wildfires in the Bryansk region, while a large fire near a landfill in the Belgorod region was reportedly caused by burning litter and deadwood. The Emergency Situations Ministry said it had localized at least three fires in the area by Sunday.

Nationwide, 10,000 people were evacuated, and 76 died in more than 8,100 fires across Russia last week, according to the Emergency Situations Ministry.

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