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Siberian Region Declares 'High Alert' Over Electricity Shortages

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Authorities in Russia's Irkutsk region in southeastern Siberia introduced a state of "high alert" due to electricity shortages, according to a government decree published Friday.

The decree signed by Governor Igor Kobzev instructs local emergency services to develop additional plans for mitigating the consequences of widespread power cuts and check the preparedness of local emergency response teams.

Local authorities in the Irkutsk region were also instructed to ensure the availability of additional fuel reserves and backup power sources.

Earlier this week, authorities in the neighboring republic of Buryatia introduced power supply restrictions that could leave as many as 30,000 residents of the capital Ulan-Ude and its suburbs without electricity, the independent news outlet Govorit NeMoskva reported.

Buryatian authorities claim that existing electricity infrastructure cannot handle growing

demand as many residents have been forced to switch to electric heating due to the rising cost of firewood and other fuels.

The Siberian republic, which is frequently ranked among the poorest regions of Russia, would require at least 17 billion rubles ($178 million) to upgrade its existing energy infrastructure, according to Govorit NeMoskva.

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