

Emergency Situations Minister Visits Far East to Assess Wildfires

April 21, 2025



Emergency Situations Minister Alexander Kurenkov and Natural Resources Minister Alexander Kozlov in the city of Chita. **Russian Emergencies Ministry**

Russia's Emergency Situations Minister Alexander Kurenkov [visited](#) the Zabaikalsky region in the country's Far East on Monday to assess growing wildfires in the area

As of Monday, 50 wildfires were [burning](#) across the Zabaikalsky region and covered roughly 168,000 hectares (415,137 acres), according to the Interfax news agency, which cited regional authorities. Nearly 70% of the fires are located in the remote and sparsely populated Tungokochensky district.

Natural Resources and Ecology Minister Alexander Kozlov joined Kurenkov on his visit to the Far East, the state-run news agency TASS [reported](#). The Emergency Situations Ministry released a [video](#) of both officials arriving in the regional capital of Chita by plane.

“The ministers will assess the operational situation in the region as a result of large natural fires,” the Emergency Situations Ministry told TASS. The two ministers are expected to fly

over the most affected areas and monitor firefighting efforts before holding a coordination meeting.

Related article: [Far East's Zabaikalsky Region Restricts Travel Amid Widespread Wildfires](#)

Responsibility for extinguishing the wildfires currently lies with Russia's [Forest Fund](#) and the Federal Forest Service. However, Interfax [reported](#) Monday that a federal-level emergency may be declared, which would shift control to the Emergency Situations Ministry.

Last week, authorities in the Zabaikalsky region [introduced](#) movement restrictions to contain the fast-spreading fires. Residents must obtain prior approval from local officials to leave their communities, except when traveling on regional or federal highways.

“The situation is extraordinary and exceptionally dangerous. Nearly the entire region is ablaze,” Zabaikalsky Governor Alexander Osipov said in a televised address last week. “Every day, dozens of settlements are endangered.”

Since the start of the year, Russia has recorded at least 680 wildfires covering more than 178,000 hectares (439,847 acres), Emergency Situations Minister Alexandr Kurenkov [said](#) last Monday.

As of Friday, more than 80% of those fires were [located](#) in the Zabaikalsky region, according to Russia's Aerial Forest Protection Service, which monitors the spread of wildfires.

Original url:

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