The Moscow Times
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3 Firefighters Killed as Wildfires Rage in Russia's Far East

May 02, 2025



Firefighters battling wildfires in the Zabaikalsky region. **NGS.ru**

Three firefighters deployed to battle the devastating wildfires in Russia's Far East Zabaikalsky region were found dead on Friday, the region's environment ministry announced.

The news comes just days after the region's fire safety chief Rinat Khismatulin resigned "at his own initiative."

Andrei Abramov, Andrei Alekmensky and Alexander Nazimov went missing on April 23 after leaving their deployment camp in the Tungokochensky district to buy food in the nearby village of Kyker.

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At least 30 people, including local volunteers, were involved in search-and-rescue efforts, according to local media.

Volunteers found the missing men's belongings in the forest on Thursday before finding their bodies a day later.

The regional Investigative Committee has launched a criminal probe into the incident.

The Zabaikalsky region, where a federal-level state of emergency was introduced last month, accounted for more than 87% of the total area engulfed by wildfires across Russia as of early Friday, according to the country's Aerial Forest Protection Service.

As many as 813 firefighting specialists, including those from other parts of Russia, were deployed to fight wildfires in the region, according to the agency.

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