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Snow Melt Triggers Flooding in Far East Russia's Buryatia

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Melting snow has triggered flooding between the southern shores of Lake Baikal and northern Mongolia in Far East Russia's republic of Buryatia, killing at least one person, according to regional emergency authorities.

Russia's Emergency Situations Ministry issued a safety alert between Thursday and Sunday due to "significant snow accumulation in mountainous areas, rapid snowmelt with rising daytime temperatures and precipitation in the form of rain and wet snow."

The ministry said a "high alert" status remains in effect in an area of Buryatia roughly the size of Connecticut after several homes were flooded.

One man drowned while trying to cross a river in the Zakamensky district of Buryatia on foot on Thursday, according to Buryatia's regional emergency response system that coordinates local services to prevent and handle disasters.

At least five towns in the district experienced full or partial power outages due to heavy snow buildup, the district's administration said Friday. Passenger vehicle traffic was suspended in a separate town after floodwaters reached the roadway.

Another district surrounding Buryatia's regional capital of Ulan-Ude has been under a state of emergency due to snowmelt since March.

Multiple mountain rivers have burst their banks, washing out critical regional highways, cutting off access to several rural villages and forcing families to evacuate their homes, according to the regional news outlet 7x7.

Meteorologists warn that the situation could rapidly deteriorate. While some areas are currently buried under up to six inches of fresh snow, a sharp temperature spike on Friday is expected to dramatically accelerate the melting process.

Heavy downpours, thunderstorms and hail are forecast to batter the region through Saturday, 7x7 reported.

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