
Chief of fire service team arrested in Khakassia wildfires case



The Main Investigations Directorate of the Russia's Investigative Committee continues investigation in mass wildfires in Khakassia that happened on 12 April 2015 and killed 31 people in Shira, Ust-Abakan, Beya and Ordzhonikidze Districts. First detentions have been conducted. Chief of a department of the Shira District fire service Viktor Zenkov was held on suspicion of negligence.

According to investigators, Zenkov, aware of developing wildfires and that it was necessary to declare 3rd level of danger failed to attend the site in person or organize evacuation of people and their property, did not order a dispatcher of the fire service to inform the central fire communication unit about the class of the fire and request additional forces for firefighting operations. The investigators requested court to remand Zenkov in custody pending trial.

In addition, the investigators are going to qualify actions of senior officials of Khakassia fire service, officials of municipal and state authorities in charge of prevention of wildfires and fire security.

Local residents give evidence concerning unfavorable situation in creating fire safety system, main elements of which are state authorities and local governments. According to them local authorities failed to take efficient measures to inform or evacuate people, protect their property even having

been aware about the unfolding disaster. This way, local residents of Shira District, where the number of dead is the highest – 14 people and over 500 houses were burned, were left one on one with the disaster. Most of them learned about the wildfire only when the flame approached their houses.

The investigators are also going to check efficiency of using budget funds allocated for fire control. This year the republic provided 14 million rubles for ensuring fire safety. However, the expenditure of the republic whose debt to the state stands at 8.3 billion rubles can hardly be considered efficient if last year for example 400 thousand rubles was requested to ensure fire safety in the government house, while 7 million rubles was spent on purchasing furniture and in 2013, the officials requested over 14 million rubles for refurbishment of two floors of the building, that was more than the sum spent on fire control across the republic. The investigation is ongoing.

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