

earthmoving equipment to the scene of a fire. The long-range outlook is not comforting either. The Ministry of the Timber Industry allocates for forestry such a miserly sum of money that if it was divided up, it would come to less than 13 kopecks per hectare.

The situation with agricultural facilities is even worse. A recent check indicated that 87% of them are operating in violation of basic standards and regulations on fire safety.

"I recently made a careful study of the national fire safety program in the USA," reports V. Cherednikov, head of the fire protection administration for the Tyumen Oblast. "There is something we can learn. For example, there is one fire station on average for every 1.7 square kilometres of an American city. With us this figure is a great deal more "fluid". The radius of our service zones can be as much as 100 kilometres or more. To make matters worse, even our extremely modest safety requirements are not observed. For example, according to our standards, the 100,000-resident city of Noyabrsk should have three fire stations for six service zones. Today, however, we have here only one fire station for four zones. And the chaos with communications? In every city or town in the oil and gas fields there are 7-9 official switchboards, but there is no communication standard or common pay phones. And when they need to, the residents are unable to ring up the fire service. As a result, because of the late calls and the great distances, in 70% of the fires our people arrive only after there are already charred remains..."

Also in poor shape is the equipment situation of Tyumen firefighters. It only takes one fire for the special clothing to become useless. There is a shortage of helmets, fire belts and axes.

The Tyumen firefighters have brought these problems to the attention of previous soviets at all levels. In response they received many nice decrees filled with promises. However, all of them have remained