

production fields. There is growing damage from fire to the cities of Nizhnevartovsk, Nadym, Surgut and Nefteyugansk. Local agrarian specialists are also stepping up the pace in this terrible race against time.

Recently a number of serious fires and emergencies have struck facilities for the recovery and transport of hydrocarbon raw material. These facilities belong to the state concerns "Gazprom" and "Tyumengeologiya", the administration for the main oil pipelines. The causes: failure to observe operating procedures. Many oil product warehouses are not equipped with devices to prevent the outbreak of fire or with automatic fire extinguishing systems. Nor with communications. To this day there are 46 residential settlements and 12 enterprises situated in the restricted zones around oil and gas pipelines. The fire risk in the cities and towns emerging in the oil and gas production zone in being exacerbated by the chaotic building of wooden field shelters and cabins. USSR Gosstroi (State Construction Council) did the Siberian people a disservice in lowering the standards for the construction of frame and panel houses. It is precisely these wooden structures which are the first to burn.

When visiting the oil and gas fields I have noticed more than once that the key facilities and entire population centres are beyond the reach of professional fire services. This is the case, for example with the towns Gubkinskii and Muravlenkovskii, each of which has 30,000 inhabitants, and the cities Langepas and Belyi Yar, which have even larger populations, and consist primarily of wooden buildings protected only by volunteer fire brigades.

The local taiga is also essentially uncared for. Numerous government agencies log millions of cubic metres of wood here. But nobody really wants to be concerned about the forest. The aerial protection service is mediocre. There isn't enough money to lease airplanes and helicopters, and there is nothing with which to transport