

"Two more fires have just been added to the 109 already recorded", he told us, "and this is in spite of the rain that we had a few days ago. Here and there thunderstorms have announced their presence - twenty fires have broken out in the forests due to lightning. When we compare this to last year, we find that the number of fires has increased four-fold. We have adopted extreme measures - the public has been forbidden access to the forests and observation and surveillance have been increased. The personnel of the central apparatus of the Ministry who have been on duty the last few days have themselves alone arrested 22 individuals for infractions of fire safety regulations. So, in spite of the drop in temperatures and the recent heavy showers, the situation remains critical. This is also confirmed by the map that I was shown by E. A. Shchetinskii, Deputy Head of the Central Board for Forest Conservation and Protection."

"The oblast system map is plotted from data supplied by the Meteor satellite", he told us. "It helps provide us with a picture of the situation as it develops for thousands of kilometers around Moscow. Nine fires are active in the Barguzin' Rayon, for example, and tomorrow that rayon will be covered with cloud and will have rain - the forest fire danger will be reduced."

-- Do the data that you obtain by satellite enable you to forecast the forest fire situation for a long period of time?

"Not yet, unfortunately. Nor does the hydrometeorological center provide special 'forest fire forecasts'. The basic operational responsibilities of the Forest Conservation Service are well known and they include: forest fire