

responsible for their actions, it is even more important to prevent an impending disaster from taking place. A disaster threatened the lower reaches of the Volga River and the Caspian Sea. It originated at the Astrakhanbumprom (Astrakhan paper manufacturing plant), or to be precise, in its vaporizing ponds. Their dam was in such poor condition that waste products had broken through it and were threatening to pour into the river and sea. The plant managers were warned that they would be held criminally negligent if the dam burst. As a result, a special construction unit fortified the dam.

The list of such actions could be continued. However, the ecological situation surrounding the Ministry of the Timber Industry enterprises is still far from normal. I will end by saying a few words about the Ministry and the enterprises and collective subordinate to it.

Everything in the timber industry begins with logging. However, even at this primary stage, the industry falls down. A few statistics will illustrate this. Last year 23.1 million roubles were paid by enterprises for violations of laws relating to the timber industry; 3,000 fines totalling nearly 70 million roubles were levied upon officials; and in 124 cases felling was halted. If this is 'responsible activity', then what is meant by 'irresponsibility'?

But of course it is the wood-processing enterprises, especially those producing pulp-and-paper, who are among the "flagships" of industry. Last year alone they discharged one and half million tonnes of sulphur dioxide, hydrogen