

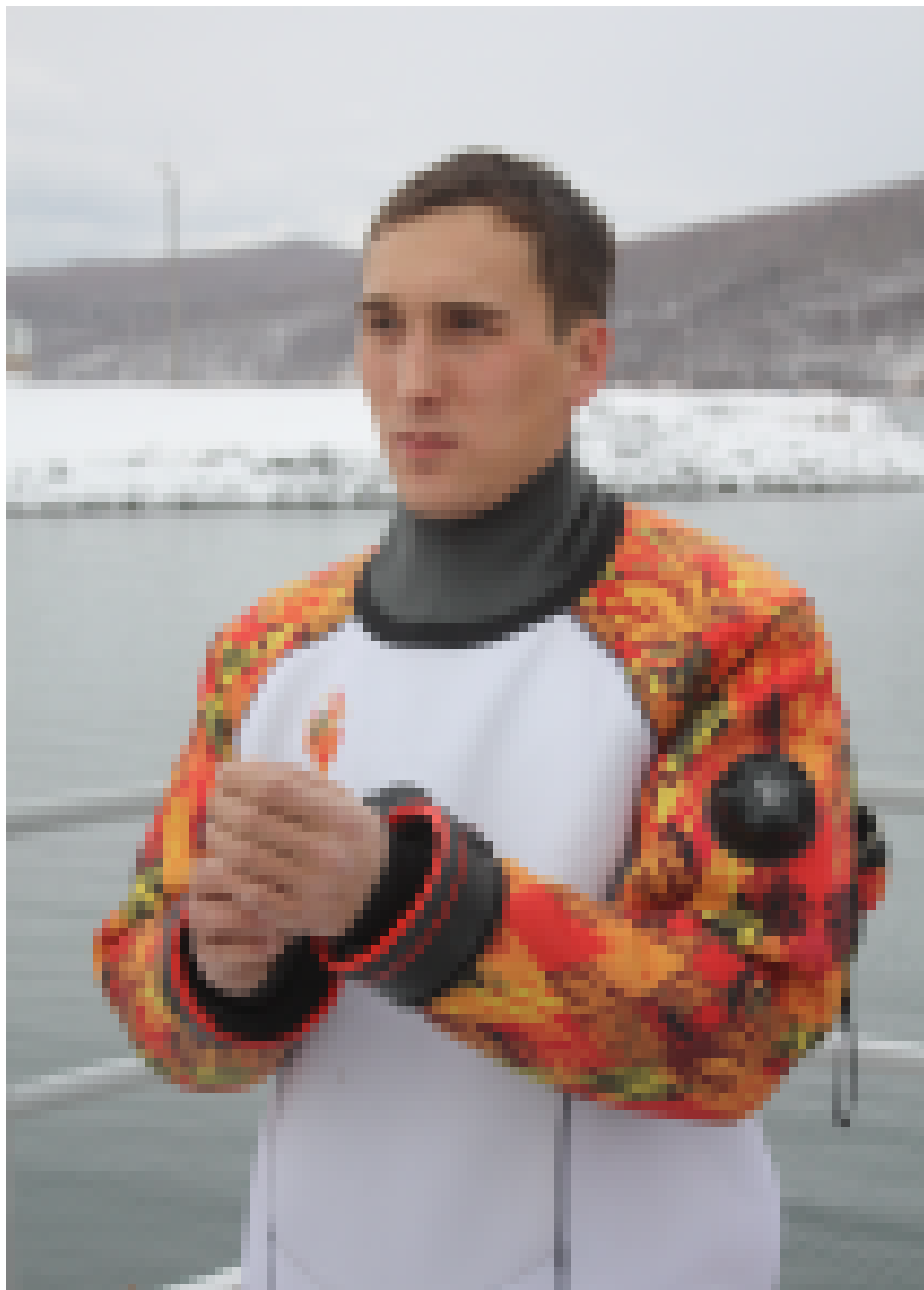


The Ministry of the Russian Federation for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Elimination  
of Consequences of Natural Disasters

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**Olympic Fire stood Baikal lake test**



The unique stage of the Olympic Torch Relay has taken place today on Baikal, during which the Torch went down to the lake bottom.

Rescuer of Baikal search-and-rescue team Nikolai Rybachenko, TV hosts Yekaterina Andreyeva and Ivan Zatevakhin, and representative of the Olympics organization committee Alexander Vronsky experienced all the difficulty of the underwater relay.

They sank the fire in a special burner, similar to a false fire, to a depth of 15 meters.

For the past two months Nikolai Rybachenko prepared physically and psychologically.

Right after the dive the 26-year-old shared his emotions and impressions. "I have contradicting feelings: on the one hand a euphoria that this way I could leave my mark in the history of the Olympic Games in Russia and the joy that everything went just perfect. On the other hand I realize that everything is over – excitement, pleasant waiting..."

Meanwhile instead of snow and squally wind promised by weather men, clear and sunny weather on Baikal favored the Olympic Torch Relay. Because of abnormally warm November the water in the lake according to Irkutsk weather service is rather warm – up to plus 10 degrees.

Special water-proof khokhloma-painted suits were made for the divers, under which they put on warmth-keeping jackets.

They dived near the Angara river head near the village of Listvyanka 50 km from the bank, where the divers and the Torch were transported on a power boat. In this place the bottom is only 23 meters deep.

It is planned to place a memorial plate dedicated to this event.

On 24 November the Olympic fire will be welcomed in Irkutsk.