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Moscow Extends Liquor Sales Restrictions

By The Moscow Times

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New city regulations will ban sales of liquor with more than 15 percent alcohol content from 10 p.m. to 10 a.m. **Vladimir Filonov**

Moscow authorities said Wednesday that they extended the overnight period during which retailers cannot sell strong spirits as part of a government campaign against alcoholism.

A decree signed by Mayor Yury Luzhkov bans sales of liquor with more than 15 percent alcohol content from 10 p.m. to 10 a.m.

Restaurants and nightclubs are not affected by the decree, which takes effect Sept. 1, said Pavel Shapkin, head of the National Alcohol Policy Center.

The measure, part of a government program to halve alcohol consumption by 2020 and thwart bootlegged vodka production, may help reduce crime in the country's capital, Shapkin said on state-run Vesti-FM radio.

“Drunks will have a harder time finding liquor at night. There are going to be fewer of them on the streets,” Shapkin said.

Russians drink about 18 liters of pure ethanol a year, or about twice the amount considered dangerous by the World Health Organization, according to the Kremlin.

President Dmitry Medvedev said last year that he was astonished to learn how much alcohol Russians drink and has since urged the government to find ways to curb consumption. Proposals include pricing for alcoholic products based on ethanol content, advertising restrictions and bans on events like beer and wine festivals.

In April, Moscow banned liquor sales from 11 p.m. to 8 a.m., but left loopholes for retailers open 24 hours a day. City authorities said Wednesday that they will stop issuing around-the-clock permits and vowed to revoke liquor licenses from businesses that violate the new measure, RIA-Novosti reported.

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