

Fuel Supply Stabilizes After Export Ban

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A young man leaving photocopied \$100 bills at the entrance of LUKoil headquarters in Moscow on Wednesday. **Alexander Natruskin**

The Energy Ministry said Wednesday that domestic fuel supplies had been stabilized after shortages caused panic buying and international embarrassment for the world's largest oil producer.

"There is a positive trend for the shipment of petroleum products to the domestic market," said Dmitry Klokov, a spokesman at the Energy Ministry, Interfax reported. "Reserves have been restored in the majority of problem regions."

Less than 2 percent of filling stations were closed because of fuel shortages, Klokov said, and less than 2 percent of stations were reporting queues.

But he admitted that there were large regional differences. The situation was normal in the Altai, Bryansk, Ivanovo, Novosibirsk and Yaroslavl regions, but there were restrictions in place in the Voronezh and Kostroma regions. The most severe problems were in the Kemerovo

and Tomsk regions, he said.

All filling stations in South Ossetia had been closed due to shortages, Gazeta.ru reported.

Some experts believe Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's February request to cut fuel prices precipitated the crisis, pushing oil companies to concentrate on exports.

Eight young people with the pro-Kremlin Young Guard youth group dumped sacks of photocopied \$100 notes and balloons outside LUKoil's Moscow office Wednesday, Interfax reported, in what is believed to have been a protest against the cost of fuel.

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