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Train Trips to Domodedovo Canceled

By Alexander Bratersky

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Aeroexpress trains have been delayed and cancelled after a track accident early Wednesday.

Train operator Aeroexpress has canceled all of its morning trips from Moscow's Paveletsky Railroad Station to Domodedovo Airport and back for Thursday and Friday after a truck rammed into a railroad bridge Wednesday, damaging train tracks.

The information on the cancellation of the trips was published on the company's official site Wednesday. Some day trips and evening trips were also canceled.

Wednesday's accident happened after a driver lost control of his MAN truck around 12:15 a.m. on Kashirskoye Shosse as he headed toward Moscow, slamming into the pillars holding up a railroad bridge.

The driver was hospitalized with unspecified injuries.

The accident was a first of its kind for Aeroexpress, which was launched in 2005 to make transportation to the city's major airports faster. The rail service has also provided an

opportunity for passengers to arrive to the airport in 45 minutes, avoiding costly taxi services.

Last year, Aeroexpress transported 17.4 million passengers.

A round trip between the Paveletsky Station and Domodedovo costs about 600 rubles ($19.35).

Repair workers were working to restore full rail traffic to the bridge Wednesday, while taxi drivers sharply raised prices for passengers trying to get to the airport on time.

Railroad officials urged airport passengers to take the accident into account in planning their travel to Domodedovo. The Paveletsky Station is a major rail hub for travelers headed to the airport and other destinations south of Moscow.

The company is planning to reimburse the cost of plane tickets to passengers who were late to the airport because of the train delays, Izvestia reported Tuesday, citing Aeroexpress executives.

“If essential, not only a plane ticket, but also hotel accommodation will be reimbursed,” the company’s press service said Wednesday.

Last July, Aeroexpress paid almost 500,000 rubles to passengers after it canceled 11 trains due to an accident. The company said at that time that the accident happened because of summer heat.

The Central Suburban Passenger Company, which is affiliated with Aeroexpress, said it prepared to deal with the situation. Both companies are co-owned by billionaire Iskander Makhmudov and his business partner Andrei Bokarev.

“At first we asked the Moscow Transport Agency to provide us with 40 buses, but we have realized that we could manage on our own,” Ilya Chernyayev, a company spokesman said.

The Central Suburban Passenger Company is the country’s biggest commuter train operator. It is 50 percent controlled by the Moscow Suburban Passenger Company, which is jointly owned by Makhmudov and Bokarev. The other shareholder is Russian Railways.

Moscow Transport Minister Maxim Liksutov was a shareholder of the company before he has assumed the government post in 2011.

In addition to Domodedovo, Aeroexpress also operates trains between Moscow and the Sheremetyevo and Vnukovo airports. Last February Aeroexpress started operations in Sochi, where the 2014 Winter Olympics will be held.

Aeroexpress spokeswoman Nadezhda Darzhiyeva said the accident would in no way affect the company’s plans to further upgrade its business. The company has announced plans to start operating bi-level railroad cars to Sheremetyevo and Domodedovo by 2015.

The 112 Stadler cars are able to carry up to 1,100 passengers and are expected to increase Aeroexpress’ passenger traffic by 2015.

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