

Putin Sees Delays in Sochi Olympic Preparations

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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SOCHI — President Vladimir Putin ordered officials to quickly overcome failures and delays in preparing for the Sochi Winter Olympics and said he expected nothing less than a "brilliant Games."

The Black Sea resort city and Olympic village still resemble a construction site five months before the start of the Games on which Putin has staked a great deal of national and personal political prestige. Work is still under way on venues and other infrastructure.

Inspecting preparatory work, Putin told a senior government minister to report to him every two weeks.

He gave no details of the delays and problems except to express consternation over recent flooding at the Sochi airport, which has been upgraded by a company owned by Oleg Deripaska, one of Russia's top businessmen.

"Despite the large amount of work that has been done — it's simply a colossal amount — there are ongoing failures and delays that, in general, are normal for such a big job," Putin told local officials in Sochi.

"But I want to draw your attention to the start date for the Games and the fact that we cannot move it. ... In order to cope with this problem, you need to work very effectively."

Putin sees hosting the Olympics as a chance to show the world what Russia can achieve more than two decades after the Soviet Union collapsed. The cost of hosting the Games is expected to rise to \$50 billion dollars, much more than expected initially and more than any other Olympics.

Making clear that he would not accept failure, Interfax quoted Putin as saying: "The result expected by us is a brilliant Games."

Passengers had to wade through ankle-deep water at Sochi airport earlier this month during heavy rain.

"Who is responsible for Sochi airport?" Putin asked. "We already have complaints about passenger services."

The airport terminal, which is expected to have to cope with up to 3,800 passengers an hour during the Games, has been updated at a cost of about \$200 million by Basel Aero, a company that is part of a group owned by metals tycoon Deripaska.

Deripaska is one of a number of businessmen who have been helping Russia prepare for the Games.

Putin told Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Kozak to report regularly.

"I myself will come here more often and I ask you, even though you are sitting here almost all the time, to report to me every two weeks," Putin said.

Putin faces calls for a boycott over a new law banning "gay propaganda" among minors, part of a conservative course taken by Putin as he tries to rally support following the biggest protests since he rose to power in 2000.

There is also a security threat from an Islamist insurgency to the east of Sochi, concerns about environmental damage and allegations that some workers have been underpaid.

Thirteen official sites are being built, including a stadium that can house 40,000 people, plus facilities for ice hockey, skiing, snowboarding and skating. About 120,000 visitors are expected during the Games.

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