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Power Failure Hampering Sochi Luge Training

By The Moscow Times

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Power failures are hampering luge training for U.S. and international teams at the Sochi track, where dozens of sliders this week are preparing for the Winter Olympics.

American lugers were in the middle of a session when power was lost Monday. Some teams' training sessions were canceled.

"The session was cut short and then we did not really know what was going on," U.S. Luge coach Mark Grimmette said Monday during a conference call from the Russian track. "I walked up to the finish area and started talking to the event manager and the track manager. They said that there was some problem with the power the next town over."

Canadian sliders and coaches said their hotel lacked power and running water. Those problems are not uncommon to the region around the track.

"Hotel manager tells me that it will last two days or perhaps more," Martin Goulet, a Canadian Olympic official, wrote Monday on his Twitter account.

Luge training began Friday and is to continue through Thursday, then will be followed by an international training session for bobsled and skeleton teams.

These training weeks are vital to Olympic preparation because most international sliders will not see the Sochi track again until the games in February. It is unknown if additional sessions will be added to make up for the training runs that luge athletes have already lost.

It is also unclear how the ice will be maintained if power at the track remains down for any extended time.

Grimmette said the U.S. Luge's session was in the daytime, so lights at the track were not required. However, electricity is needed to run the timing system and the public-address system. The PA system allows sliders up top know when sleds at the bottom of the chute have been removed and the track is clear for the next competitor.

This is at least the second time that international athletes have encountered difficulty at the Sochi track. Several athletes said last winter that ice conditions were subpar when they were training there.

Grimmette had no complaints about the ice this week, saying workers from other tracks around the world convened on the Sochi facility to help maintain the chute.

"The track conditions are very good," Grimmette said.

World Cup racing for luge, bobsled and skeleton starts this month.

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