

Sochi Volunteers Filling Empty Seats, Organizers Say

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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SOCHI — Sochi Winter Olympics organizers are asking volunteers to fill some of the empty seats at venues during competition, they said Monday.

Some 70 percent of tickets were sold prior to the event in the Black Sea resort. But with some venues having empty seats due to fans arriving late, tight security checks and departing Russian spectators, organizers want to make sure the pictures broadcast around the world show full stadiums.

"As with every organizing committee, we do have the motivation program, personal motivation program, so those volunteers who are not in shifts might take part in it," Sochi Games spokeswoman Alexandra Kosterina told reporters.

"It depends on the events. If we see that there is not a turnout and there are seats available then, yes, we invite some of the volunteers to join in."

Some venues have seen empty seats, especially at events where Russian fans pack in to see one of their athletes but leave after they have competed.

On Sunday, stands at the men's ski jumping event were about 85 percent full.

After Russian jumper Mikhail Maksimochkin — the eighth-to-last man to go — put in a very disappointing second jump, hundreds of Russian fans immediately began streaming toward the exits.

By the time Poland's Kamil Stoch won the gold medal, the tribunes were about half empty.

The situation was similar in the speed skating venue on Saturday.

Sven Kramer, one of the sport's biggest names, was crowned 5,000 meters champion in a venue that was far from full as home fans left in their droves after Russian skaters finished competing.

The sight of empty seats was a major concern at the start of the 2012 London Olympics, while the Beijing 2008 Summer Games also deployed volunteers to fill empty seats in the early rounds of some competitions.

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