The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
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Majority of Russia's Urban Population Is Breathing Highly Polluted Air

September 03, 2014



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The majority of Russia's urban population is breathing highly polluted air, including at least 14 million people in 38 cities where pollutant concentrations are 10 times above acceptable levels, according to a recent report by the national weather and environment service.

Moscow was among cities that rated high on air pollution, mostly due to the dangerous levels of nitrogen dioxide, ammonia, benzopyrene and formaldehyde in its air, RosHydroMet said in an annual report released this week, following the monitoring of more than 200 Russian cities and towns throughout last year.

The total number of Russians whose cities have "high" or "very high" concentrations of pollutants in the air reached a staggering 54.2 million people, or 52 percent of the country's total urban population, the report said.

RosHydroMet has compiled a "priority list" of 30 especially polluted cities, which are home

to 18.7 million people, the report said, adding that in 30 Russian regions, air pollution was rated as "high" or "very high" in all the cities that were monitored.

RosHydroMet attributed the gloomy environmental situation to the "growth of automobile transportation in big cities, as well as the low effectiveness of purifying waste and discharge of pollutants."

The water that flows through Moscow is also highly polluted, the report said.

The Moscow River goes from "dirty," upstream of the city, to "very dirty" downstream, the report said. The river's tributaries and smaller waterways in and around the city — such as the Yauza River — have also received similarly bad ratings.

"The most heavily polluted waterways in the upper Volga reservoirs' basin during the past 10 years are the waterways of the Moscow region," including the Lama, Dubna, Sestra and Kunya rivers, the report said.

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