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Gazprom's Moscow Refinery Fined $30 Million for Pollution

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An oil refinery run by state monopoly Gazprom, which is currently fighting allegations of blanketing Moscow in smog earlier this month, has been fined almost 1.4 billion rubles ($30 million) as part of an older environmental case.

Since at least 2007, the refinery in the southeastern Kapotnya neighborhood has been leaking oil and petroleum products into the ground, according to a ruling by a Moscow arbitration court cited by Gazeta.ru on Tuesday.

The ruling also said the refinery has been dumping oil directly into the Moscow River. The court's decision was made in mid-November but did not attract media attention until this week.

The concentration of hazardous chemicals in the refinery's drainage pipe was found to exceed maximum permissible levels by 44 times, the report said.

Gazprom Neft, the oil-focused subsidiary that owns the plant, said it had updated

the factory's pollution prevention systems last year, in line with another court ruling. But the refinery was still hit with a fine over the environmental harm caused.

Earlier this month, the refinery was widely considered the prime suspect as a possible source of acrid smog that repeatedly blanketed the city, causing respiration problems for some residents.

The factory denied that it was to blame, however, as did other industrial facilities in the city's southeast. Environmental authorities tried to blame the polluted air on burning wood, but conceded that industrial exhausts could have at least contributed.

So far, officials have not been able to name which factory has been fouling up the air in the city of 14 million for several weeks.

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