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Mass Moscow Roadworks Caused Flooding, Says Expert

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The flooding of some of central Moscow's busiest streets may have been caused by major roadworks, the RBC newspaper reported Monday.

Floods broke out across the city last week after drainage systems became blocked with waste built up during extensive construction work in the capital, said Alexander Zakharov, deputy head of technical management of the state utility enterprise Mosvodostok.

Much of the construction work taking part in the city forms part of the Moscow government's "My Street" program. The work has been presented by authorities as the "the most major improvement works in the modern history of Moscow," and includes the remodeling of pedestrian areas along major roads, the reconstruction of building facades and the relaying of central Moscow streets.

"On the whole, the flooded areas were where the "My Street" works are taking place," said

Zakharov.

“During heavy rainfall, the drainage channels because instantly blocked due to the amount paving slabs, packaging from building materials and sand there,” he said. While workers in the worst affected areas workers did attempt to clear the drains, the waste buildup proved to be to thick, he said.

Videos showing flooding on the New Arbat, Gogolevsky Boulevard and Patriarch’s Ponds area appeared on social media following storms across the city on July 22.

Among the areas affected was Malaya Bronnaya Street, which underwent a 18.6 million ruble ($286 thousand) renovation last year. Work on the street's storm drains was carried out by Techline, the sole bidder for the tender, RBC reported. Moscow’s Mayor Sergey Sobyanin calling the work’s completion “a rebirth.”

Writing on his website, opposition activist Alexey Navalny said that the street, "had drowned just ten months after its rebirth.”

Moscow authorities have said that the flooding was caused by abnormally heavy rain, a claim that was rebuked by Roman Vilfand, director of Russia’s meteorological center.

“Let’s not look at this as something unusual, Vilfand said in an interview with the Moskva Govorit radio station. "It’s summer, there are rains and storms. It’s a normal situation.”

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