

Russia Suspends Sale of Non-Food Products Containing Alcohol

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Russia has implemented a month-long ban on the sale of non-food products containing more than 25 percent alcohol, a move intended to fight the country's "surrogate alcohol" problem.

The ban follows a Dec. 23 order by Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev and went into effect on Monday, consumer watchdog Rospotrebnadzor's press service stated. The restrictions are set to last for 30 days, and exclude perfumes and glass-cleaning products.

The new measures are a response to a mass poisoning in Irkutsk that has claimed the lives of at least 75 people since Dec. 17. The victims had consumed hawthorn berry tincture, an ethyl alcohol-based bath lotion often used as a substitute for vodka. In Irkutsk, however, the tincture contained highly toxic methyl alcohol.

The mayor of Irkutsk declared a state of emergency and several suppliers of hawthorn berry tincture, mostly retailers, have been arrested.

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