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Russian 'Batman' Protests Rising Energy Bills in Siberia

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Alexei Nosov / Facebook

An anonymous citizen activist in the Siberian city of Novosibirsk has harnessed the power of lasers to promote a protest against energy bill price hikes for local people.

The unidentified demonstrator — dubbed online as the Novosibirsk Batman – projected the time and date of the protest alongside the message "no price hikes" onto the facade of Novosibirsk's City Hall and buildings belonging to the Sibeko energy company.

Hundreds of Novosibirsk residents plan to meet in the city center on Saturday to protest against rising energy bills. Utility bills there are expected to rise by an average of 15 to 25 percent from July 1, 2017, though activists warn that the price hike in some neighborhoods could be as high as 55 percent.

Protest organizer Alexey Nosov distanced himself from the stunt, telling activist outlet Open Russia that diligent citizens had taken it upon themselves to promote the event.

"The organizers of this stunt are the people of Novosibirsk themselves. They've come up with it and carried it out themselves to express their protest," he said. "The police have not contacted me about it, because nothing illegal was happening. Bringing light to the people is the noble work of Prometheus."

Embed:

Other Novosibirsk residents were less supportive of the stunt, including Sibeko CEO Ruslan Vlasov.

"We are completely open to dialogue [on rising prices], so such hooliganism, in my opinion, is completely unneeded,"
he told the Sib.fm news outlet. "Firstly, [these lights] aren't
beautifying our city, and secondly it's disrespectful to other people's property."

Russia's federal government announced last year that energy bills would need to rise across the country by approximately 4 percent to offset the cost of inflation. Novosibirsk officials further increased their prices, arguing that warmer winters were driving down energy costs and bringing less income to suppliers.

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