

An Overview of Russian Laws Coming Into Effect This Month

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Sergei Kiselyov / Moskva News Agency

In Russia, the first of the month is often marked with a slew of new laws and rules coming into effect. This October is no exception.

Life will change for Russians in ways both big and small starting today. Here's a look at some of the new rules and laws taking effect:

Fire safety

Starting today, Russians will face new rules regarding open flames on their balconies. Those found to be violating the rule by lighting an open flame that results in a fire will be fined and potentially charged with a crime for more serious infractions. The new law has [ignited](#) outrage among city-dwelling Russians, the majority of whom live in apartment blocks with balconies that they often use for smoking and barbecuing.

While the new fire safety legislation doesn't specify what constitutes an "open flame," the

Emergency Situations Ministry has [said](#) that the decree only punishes smoking on balconies if it leads to a fire.

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VAT

The value-added tax (VAT) rate for palm oil sales will increase from 10% to 20%, while the VAT rate for the sale of fruits and berries is decreasing to 10%. The changes are [expected](#) to lead to an increase in candy and confectionery prices and a decrease in fruit prices.

Hostels and hotels

A controversial Russian law banning hostels and hotels located in residential dwellings goes into effect today.

Related article: [Russian Lawmakers Pass Law Banning Hostels in Apartments](#)

Hoteliers have [warned](#) that the ban could shutter up to 40% of hostels in Moscow and 80% in St. Petersburg, costing 16 billion rubles (\$243 million) of losses in yearly tax revenue. NGOs have said that the ban could criminalize an estimated 10,000 apartment owners who rent out their properties on Airbnb in Moscow.

Hotels and guest houses must have separate entrances, fire alarms, sanitation and soundproofing installed in order to comply with the law.

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