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Russian News Outlets Ordered to Take Down ‘Fake’ Coronavirus News

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Authorities have threatened to revoke the licenses of outlets found to be distributing false information about the virus that “sows panic.” **Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency**

Russia has ordered several news outlets to take down information about the coronavirus outbreak that it says is “fake.”

Russia’s communications watchdog Roskomnadzor on Friday said that the Ekho Moskvy radio station, the Govorit Magadan news website and several other outlets had published “false information that is socially significant” about the coronavirus that “threatens to massively disrupt public order or public safety.”

Related article: Putin Says Fake Coronavirus Rumors 'Organized From Abroad'

It didn’t specify which information was fake. Both Ekho Moskvy and Govorit Magadan said they had removed the offending articles from their websites.

Govorit Magadan later said that it was ordered to take down a story it published about the death of a resident of the Magadan region suspected to have coronavirus. Ekho Moskvy's editor-in-chief, Alexei Venediktov, said the information that prompted Roskomnadzor's complaint was in a now-removed interview.

The outlets now face administrative fines of up to 500,000 rubles ($6,200) under a law imposing penalties for "fake news" signed by President Vladimir Putin last year.

Roskomnadzor also called on VKontakte, Facebook and Instagram to monitor and remove any fake coronavirus information on their websites.

The news comes days after the communications watchdog threatened to block and revoke the licenses of any news outlets found to be distributing false information about the coronavirus that "sows panic" among Russian citizens.

On Thursday, authorities in the Amur region opened an administrative case against a woman who posted on social media that there were coronavirus cases in the region. Law enforcement says the post was fake.

Putin said earlier this month that fake news reports about coronavirus were being sent to Russia from abroad to spread panic among the public.

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