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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Moscow to Reopen Construction Sites This Week

Move comes as city remains on strict lockdown.

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Moscow stopped construction work on 13 April as the coronavirus outbreak accelerated rapidly. **Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency**

Dozens of construction sites across the Russian capital will reopen Wednesday in one of the first relaxations of Moscow's strict lockdown measures.

Workers at more than 180 sites — more than half of which are residential housing developments — will be allowed to go back to work later this week, industry media outlets reported Monday, citing a decree signed by city authorities at the end of April.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin stopped all construction work in mid-April, while President Vladimir Putin later added the sector to the Kremlin's list of the most severely affected industries, allowing construction firms to access cheap government loans. Industry bosses told The Moscow Times government subsidized mortgages and caps on interest payments have cushioned Russia's construction industry from the coronavirus blow.

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The loosening of restrictions on construction work will be one of the first softenings of restrictions introduced by Moscow to fight the outbreak. Meanwhile, Russia's "non-working" period, first introduced at the end of March, as well as the capital's strict self-isolation regime is due to run until at least May 11.

The move comes despite Russia continuing to report growing numbers of coronavirus cases. More than 20,000 new infections were confirmed over the last 48 hours, making Russia the seventh most-affected country from the pandemic.

Sobyanin warned over the weekend that Moscow — the epicenter of the outbreak in Russia — had not yet reached the peak of the virus, while a Health Ministry pulmonologist said Monday that Russia was still a long way from reaching the plateau of infections.

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