

# Russia Admits to 'World's Largest' Arctic Oil Spill

December 24, 2020



Some 21,000 tons of oil poured into the surrounding ground and waterways after a diesel oil tank belonging to a subsidiary of Russian metals giant Nornickel collapsed on May 29. **Kirill Kukhmar / TASS**

Russian authorities said the fuel spill at an Arctic power station earlier in 2020 was the largest in world history, a top emergencies official said Thursday.

Some 21,000 tons of oil poured into the surrounding ground and waterways near the city of Norilsk after a diesel oil tank belonging to a subsidiary of Russian metals giant Nornickel collapsed on May 29.

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“Such an amount of liquid diesel fuel has never been spilled in the history of mankind,” the state-run RIA Novosti news agency [quoted](#) Deputy Emergency Minister Alexander Chupriyan as telling reporters.

“We already trapped [the fuel] in the Arctic zone,” he said.

A team of Nornickel-funded scientists, meanwhile, struck a more optimistic tone with their discovery of the five polluted rivers’ [self-cleaning](#) abilities, according to their final report cited by the state-run TASS news agency Wednesday.

“The microflora in the studied waters has adapted to oil products and is able to participate in their decomposition,” said members of the so-called Great Norilsk Expedition organized by the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences in August.

Nornickel is currently contesting a \$2 billion damages claim with Russia’s state environmental watchdog.

A different Nornickel-commissioned report [said](#) last month that the oil spill was “inevitable” due to design flaws, management failures and rising temperatures in the region.

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