

Russian Authorities Battle to Contain New Arctic Oil Spill

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Authorities in the northern Russian republic of Komi have [declared](#) an emergency this week after roughly seven tons of crude oil spilled into local soil and waterways, threatening the area's ecosystems and populated areas.

The spill was likely the result of an accident at a pipeline operated by Russian oil producer Lukoil, officials have [determined](#). It comes nearly a year after a [leak](#) from a fuel storage facility operated by Russian mining giant Nornickel led to the worst Arctic oil spill in history.

According to local media, the leak [came](#) from a pipeline that connects the Oshskoye oil field in the neighboring Nenets autonomous district to a nearby Lukoil storage facility. The oil reached the Kolva river and traveled downstream to Usinsk, a town of 45,000 people located 2,000 kilometers northeast of Moscow.

On Thursday, Lukoil officials said that around 150 employees were working to contain the

spill. Initial estimates said roughly four tons of crude oil [contaminated](#) 1.27 hectares of ground around the pipeline, while three tons entered the Kolva river and moved downstream to populated areas.

While oil booms are usually used to contain oil spills on water, there is too much moving ice on the Kolva at this time of year to use that technique, environmental experts said.

Activists claim that Lukoil is hiding the real magnitude of yet another disastrous oil spill in Russia's Arctic. Locals had reportedly noticed dead fish in the river on May 10, before the accident was officially confirmed.

"Lukoil probably concealed the real time and scale of the accident, as they've done before," activists from the local Pechora Rescue Committee NGO [said](#) Thursday.

"It's obvious that most of the oil is moving downstream unimpeded, together with ice," they [added](#) Friday as polluted water kept moving to Usinsk.

Vladimir Chuprov, project director at Greenpeace Russia, [said](#) such leaks happen when the metal used in pipelines corrodes as it's used past its expiration date.

"Gradual phaseout of oil as an energy source is an optimal way to solve the oil spill problem," he said.

The Investigative Committee for the Arkhangelsk region and Nenets autonomous district [opened](#) a criminal case into the spill on Thursday.

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