

Melting Permafrost Could Cost Russian Economy \$67Bln by 2050

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Approximately 65% of Russian territory is covered by permafrost – the upper layer of soil that stays frozen year-round **Lev Fedoseyev / TASS**

The Russian economy could lose more than 5 trillion rubles (\$67 billion) by 2050 due to melting permafrost damage to infrastructure, Russian environmental minister Alexander Kozlov [told](#) his audience at the 9th Nevsky International Ecological Congress in St. Petersburg on Thursday.

Approximately 65% of Russian territory is covered by permafrost – the upper layer of soil that stays frozen year-round, sometimes for thousands of years. Climate change is causing the permafrost to melt rapidly with catastrophic effects on the infrastructure. Around 23% of technical failures and 29% of loss in fossil fuel extraction are caused by permafrost degradation, Alexander Kozlov said.

“There are problems with building new railway lines and roads. [We estimate] that more than 40% of buildings and infrastructure facilities in permafrost-covered areas have already been damaged,” the minister said.

The Natural Resources and Environment Ministry aims to create a system for monitoring climate-induced permafrost damage, Alexander Kozlov said. By July 30 the State Duma is expected to receive the bill from the ministry to create the system. By 2024 the government hopes to work out technologies and methods for permafrost observation. After that, monitoring would begin.

Russia is [warming](#) 2.5 times faster than the planet as a whole. Permafrost melting could [bring](#) agriculture into Arctic regions, but it could also make Russian ecosystems barely recognizable. By 2100 St. Petersburg and Moscow could be surrounded by temperate deserts, and the tundra could disappear entirely, scientists at Aalto University [predict](#).

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