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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia's Covid Deaths Hit New Record High Ahead of Nationwide Restrictions

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Sergei Bobylev / TASS

Updated to add the nationwide mandatory vaccination announcement.

Russia reported a record high number of coronavirus deaths Tuesday as Europe's hardest-hit country braces for nationwide restrictions this week.

Russia has repeatedly set new all-time highs for Covid-19 deaths over the past month and is currently reporting the second-highest number of daily fatalities in the world after the U.S.

According to government figures, 1,106 people have died from Covid-19 over the last 24 hours.

Tuesday's increase brings the official death toll to 232,775 — Europe's highest — though authorities are accused of dramatically downplaying that figure. A Moscow Times analysis of excess deaths published by the federal statistics agency Rosstat puts Russia's total excess fatality count since the start of the pandemic at 660,000.

All of Russia's 85 regions across 11 time zones have now mandated vaccines for certain categories of workers, Anna Popova, who heads the federal health watchdog that is leading the country's response to the virus, said Tuesday.

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The latest figures come days before Russia's mandated paid vacation for non-essential workers in hopes of putting the brakes on spiraling Covid-19 deaths and cases takes effect from Saturday, Oct. 30, to Nov. 7.

Moscow, the epicenter of Russia's coronavirus outbreak, will go into the so-called "non-working" period this Thursday, with all businesses and services except grocery stores and pharmacies suspended.

Russia's coronavirus task force also reported 36,446 coronavirus cases Tuesday.

Russia has the world's fifth-highest total caseload of more than 8.3 million infections since the start of the pandemic, with the more-infectious Delta variant and stubbornly low vaccination rates fueling the virus' spread since the summer.

Only around 36% of Russians have been fully vaccinated despite the availability of four homegrown vaccines and several regions mandating shots for certain categories of workers.

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