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Third Tanker Sends Distress Signal as Russia Deals With Black Sea Oil Spill

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A third Russian-flagged tanker has issued a distress signal two days after a storm badly damaged two other vessels and caused a major oil spill, the Interfax news agency reported Tuesday, citing authorities and emergency services.

The Volgoneft 109 tanker was anchored in the waters of Port Kavkaz in the Kerch Strait when its captain reported a damaged cargo tank, federal shipping agency Rosmorrechflot said. The Kerch Strait connects the Black and Azov seas, as well as annexed Crimea and mainland Russia.

"The water tightness of the hull itself is not compromised, there is no leakage into the sea," Interfax quoted a Rosmorrechflot spokesperson as saying.

Volgoneft 109 was carrying fuel oil known as mazut when it issued the distress signal due to a crack on board, an emergency source was quoted as saying.

The press service of the Krasnodar region branch of Russia's Emergency Situations Ministry said the incident with Volgoneft 109 was "not critical."

Related article: Oil Spill Washes Up on Russia's Black Sea Coast After Storm Hits Aging Tankers

Volgoneft 109 is carrying some 4,000 metric tons of fuel oil and has 14 crew members, according to the Baza Telegram news channel, which is believed to have ties to Russian law enforcement. Baza said the ship issued a distress signal shortly after midnight Tuesday.

On Sunday, a storm ripped the Volgoneft 212 tanker in half and ran Volgoneft 239 aground in the Kerch Strait, spilling an estimated 3,000 metric tons of oil products that washed up on the Black Sea coast by Tuesday morning. Greenpeace Ukraine warned of an environmental catastrophe.

The spillage extended to more than 23 kilometers across the resort of Anapa, regional emergency chief Sergei Shtrikov said. Anapa and two other Krasnodar region villages declared a state of emergency due to the oil spill.

One crew member of Volgoneft 212 was killed and 26 others were rescued from both tankers after Sunday's storm. Media reported that the vessels were more than 50 years old.

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