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Moscow Sends Dozens of Water Trucks to Occupied Donetsk Amid Shortage Crisis

July 28, 2025



A man fills a plastic bottle with water from a spring in the village of Nizhnyaya Krynka. **Dmitry Yagodkin / TASS**

Authorities in Moscow have dispatched dozens of water trucks to the occupied Donetsk region in eastern Ukraine, Kremlin-installed officials said Sunday, as the area grapples with an acute water shortage.

"Seventy-five tanker trucks from Moscow, sent to the DPR on direct orders from President Vladimir Putin, have already arrived," regional head Denis Pushilin wrote on Telegram, using the acronym for the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic.

He said an additional 60 trucks from other Russian regions were on their way.

While Donetsk residents have dealt with sporadic water shortages for years, the situation has worsened dramatically in recent weeks. By mid-July, local reservoirs had nearly dried up,

according to Russian media reports.

Water that does reach homes is often murky and unusable for cooking or bathing. On social media, Donetsk residents have shared photos of brown, sludge-like water flowing from their taps.

In response, local officials in Donetsk and the nearby city of Makiivka began rationing water on July 21, limiting residential supplies to once every three days in a bid to conserve resources for households and local industries.

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Pushilin said on Sunday that authorities from Moscow and St. Petersburg were assisting in emergency repairs to burst water pipes, which have compounded the crisis. Russian Construction Minister Irek Faizullin visited Donetsk over the weekend to oversee the response.

Earlier, Donetsk residents told RTVI broadcaster that the current water shortage is the worst they have seen in recent years. Many locals now rely on store-bought water for cooking and hygiene, saying the limited supply is barely sufficient to wash dishes or bathe.

Daytime temperatures in Donetsk have remained above 30 degrees Celsius (86 Fahrenheit) for several days, accelerating water use. Later this week, temperatures are expected to reach up to 37 C (98 F).

Price gouging has also become a concern. Residents reported stores charging up to 5 rubles ($0.06) per liter for water, prompting criticism online.

Pushilin on Monday said law enforcement authorities were investigating businesses suspected of exceeding a state-enforced cap of 3.5 rubles per liter.

The water supply crisis in Donetsk dates back to 2014, when Ukrainian forces regained control of the town of Sloviansk, cutting off access to the Siverskyi Donets-Donbas Canal, the region's main water artery.

Kyiv's continued control of that area has made repairs or resumption of water flow impossible, Russian-installed officials claim.

Meanwhile, the European Drought Observatory has reported intensifying drought conditions across eastern and southern Ukraine, with record-high summer temperatures and low rainfall further straining the region's water resources.

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