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Russia Boosts Fuel Imports From Belarus as Refinery Strikes Deepen Domestic Shortages

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Oleg Spiridonov / Business Online / TASS

Russia has ramped up imports of gasoline from Belarus to ease mounting fuel shortages caused by Ukrainian attacks on its oil refineries, Reuters reported Tuesday, citing industry sources.

Imports of Belarusian gasoline surged fourfold month-on-month to 49,000 tons in September while diesel deliveries reached 33,000 tons, the sources said.

Belarusian refiners continued to export their own fuel abroad through Russian ports, with transit shipments rising by around 1% in September to 140,000 tons. However, transit exports fell nearly 40% year on year to 1.17 million tons between January and September due to lower refinery throughput in Belarus, Reuters reported.

Belarus operates two major refineries, Novopolotsk and Mozyr, which have a combined

processing capacity of around 12 million tons of crude oil per year. They typically run below capacity, producing about 9 million tons annually.

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The spike in Russian fuel demand follows a wave of Ukrainian drone attacks that have repeatedly targeted Russian oil refineries since early August.

Roughly one in three of Russia's refineries has come under attack over the past two months.

At least four plants — including the Novokuybyshevsk refinery, Gazprom's Astrakhan gas processing plant and Rosneft's Ryazan refinery, one of the country's five largest — were forced to halt or reduce operations in September. Another five refineries were hit in early October.

As a result, Russia's crude processing volumes fell to 4.86 million barrels per day in October — down by 484,000 barrels, or nearly 10%, from July levels, according to Bloomberg.

Refining activity was 5% lower than in October 2024 and 14% below pre-war 2021 levels, marking the lowest fuel output in at least five years.

The shortage has led to fuel rationing across more than 20 regions, from Sakhalin in the Far East to the Nizhny Novgorod region in central Russia. Authorities in Tyumen, Sverdlovsk, Chelyabinsk and annexed Crimea have curbed retail fuel purchases.

To contain the crisis, the government has banned exports of gasoline and diesel and, according to the Kommersant business daily, is preparing to import gasoline from China, Singapore and South Korea.

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