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Russia Grounds Siberian Airline Following Fatal Crash

October 27, 2025



Gleb Osokin (CC BY-SA 3.0)

Russian authorities have banned the regional carrier Angara Airlines from operating commercial passenger flights starting next week, Russia's aviation regulator Rosaviatsia said Monday.

The grounding follows an Angara An-24 crash in July, when all 48 people on board were killed after the aircraft went down while attempting to land in the Amur region.

Rosaviatsia suspended Angara's aircraft maintenance certificate and later withdrew approval for its flight training center after the accident.

Monday's statement said Angara Airlines' operating license would be revoked, effectively grounding the Irkutsk-based carrier. The carrier has stopped all ticket sales after Nov. 1.

Passengers who bought tickets for flights after Nov. 5 will receive a full refund or can rebook their trips on partner airlines, the regulator said.

The company operated mostly Soviet-built Antonov An-24 and An-26 aircraft to serve a network of short regional routes across eastern Siberia and the Russian Far East.

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Rosaviatsia said other domestic carriers, including IrAero and Aurora Airlines, would take over Angara's routes, including flights from Irkutsk and Khabarovsk to small remote towns accessible only by air.

Aviation safety experts say small regional carriers often operate under challenging weather and infrastructure conditions, with aging aircraft and limited spare parts.

Founded in 2000, Angara had been one of the few airlines maintaining air links between isolated Siberian settlements where rail and road connections are limited or nonexistent.

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