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Russia's Shift Workers Face Mounting Wage Payment Delays

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Vladimir Smirnov / TASS

Shift workers across Russia are increasingly reporting delayed or unpaid wages, the pro-Kremlin daily Izvestia reported Friday.

Cases have been documented this year in regions across the country including Sverdlovsk, Kaliningrad, the Yamal-Nenets autonomous district, Krasnoyarsk, Primorye and Chukotka, Izvestia reported.

In Nizhny Tagil, a major industrial town in the Sverdlovsk region, some 200 workers at the Volkovskoye copper mine were effectively left stranded at the work site after going two months without pay.

"The situation is critical: people cannot pay loans, mortgages, utility bills or support families with children, and they cannot leave the facility," one of the workers said in a video address published Tuesday.

A similar situation took place at a construction site run in the town of Tarko-Sale in Yamal-Nenets.

Earlier, 300 workers at the Tanalau field in the northern Krasnoyarsk region said they were unable to return home because their wages had not been paid.

Staff at the Primorskaya GRES power plant in the Far East Primorye region also reportedly took out loans to leave their shifts amid long delays.

“The situation in the shift-work sector is very serious,” activist Natalia Demenko, who works with migrant shift workers, told Izvestia.

She said companies that fall behind on payroll often re-register under new legal entities and recruit new staff, leaving existing workers without compensation.

Firms currently facing prolonged delays include SMT in Yekaterinburg, Garantstroy in Tolyatti and roughly 34 companies in cities such as Moscow, St. Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Kaluga, Grozny, Nizhny Novgorod and Magadan.

A market source told Izvestia that the problem stems from the multilayered system of contractors and subcontractors that dominate large projects.

Although main project owners insist they transfer funding on time, “somewhere down the chain at the contractor–subcontractor level, the money disappears,” Demenko said.

Complaints about late wages have risen by 60% in recent months compared to a year earlier, according to Yekaterina Agaeva, CEO of job-search platform GdeRabota.ru.

She told Izvestia that 46% of companies behind wage arrears operate in mining and manufacturing, sectors that tend to rely on shift work.

The payment delays come as Russia’s shift-work labor force continues to grow.

Agaeva estimated that up to 1.7 million people may now be employed on rotational schedules, more than the number of schoolteachers nationwide. Employers posted 85,200 new rotational-work vacancies in the past month alone, she said.

Outstanding wage arrears across Russia reached 2.2 billion rubles ($27.2 million) by the end of October 2025, up from 729 million rubles ($9.2 million) a year earlier, according to state statistics agency Rosstat.

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