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Murmansk Region Issues Emergency Declaration as Arctic Storm Knocks Out Power

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An investigator in Murmansk at the site of a damaged transmission tower. **@su_skr51 / Telegram**

Authorities in the northern Murmansk region declared a state of emergency after a powerful winter storm damaged the aging power grid, leaving parts of the region without electricity and prompting a criminal investigation into possible negligence.

The storm, which brought ice and winds late Friday, damaged five transmission towers, cutting power to parts of the cities of Murmansk and Severomorsk. Local investigators said two of the towers had been in service since 1966, while another two dated back to the 1980s.

The local branch of the Investigative Committee, Russia's top investigative body, said the service life of the towers is limited to 40 years, after which they are required to undergo inspections every five years. Investigators are trying to determine whether negligence contributed to the failures, including when the last inspections of the towers took place.

On Sunday, Murmansk region Governor Andrei Chibis said repair crews from the state-owned energy company Rosseti had been unable to restore power fully because of severe weather conditions.

“Due to the prolonged nature of this outage, we’re declaring a state of emergency across the Murmansk region,” he wrote on Telegram.

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Chibis said the state of emergency would allow authorities to secure “additional equipment and resources from private companies” to address the damage. He said the measure would not impact daily life for residents.

Rosseti said Monday afternoon that two of the five damaged transmission towers had been repaired despite what it described as extreme working conditions.

Activists and internet monitoring groups reported that mobile internet service had been disrupted across the region as people posted angry messages online disputing the local government’s claim that electricity had been restored to 80% of households.

Authorities have not commented on the internet disruptions.

The Murmansk region has a population of just over 650,000. Around 264,000 people live in the regional capital, Murmansk, located not far from the coast of the Barents Sea.

Temperatures in the region are expected to drop to minus 28 degrees Celsius (minus 18.4 degrees Fahrenheit) in the coming days as repair crews continue efforts to restore power.

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