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Russian Railways Forms Task Force to Address Fuel Shortages

June 17, 2026



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Russia's state railway monopoly announced Wednesday the creation of a specialized task force to manage fuel transportation across the country, as an increasing number of regions implement rationing measures amid a coordinated Ukrainian drone campaign against oil refineries and supply lines.

In a statement, Russian Railways said the new task force will focus on maintaining steady deliveries of petroleum products while navigating a volatile "operational environment" — a standard euphemism used by officials to refer to the fallout from Ukrainian attacks.

The company highlighted growing concern over aviation fuel, noting that keeping Russian airports supplied has become a "zone of special attention" to "eliminate fuel shortages." Earlier this month, the Russian government banned jet fuel exports until the end of November.

At the same time, Russian Railways said it was "accepting maximum cargo volumes within

the current technical limits of its infrastructure" and urged other companies in the oil and fuel supply chain to strictly adhere to unloading schedules, warning that any delays in emptying fuel tank cars would paralyze bottleneck routes and choke off the return of rolling stock to refineries.

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Russia's Energy Ministry said last week that it set up an "industry-wide task force" with the country's largest energy companies to ensure the "stable and efficient operation of the entire energy sector." It acknowledged for the first time that Ukrainian attacks were to blame for "difficulties" in the domestic fuel market.

Dozens of Russian regions have seen fuel rationing measures slowly introduced at gas stations in recent weeks. The disruptions arrive at a critical time, with both the summer vacation travel season and the agricultural farming season in full swing.

The severity of the rationing varies by region and retail chain. In most cases, caps on how much gasoline motorists can purchase appear designed to prevent panic buying and hoarding rather than address an acute, immediate crisis.

Annexed Crimea has borne the brunt of the disruptions. The peninsula depends entirely on fuel transported from mainland Russia, and supplies have become so limited that motorists are now required to acquire QR codes in order to fill up at local gas stations.

The average price of gasoline in Russia has climbed 5.6% since the start of the year, with a single-week jump pushing national averages to 68.45 rubles per liter ($3.55 per gallon) as of June 8.

Industry sources told Reuters on Wednesday that Russia will import fuel from Asia by sea this month due to the shortages.

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