

Bill Bans Selling Strong Beer at Kiosks and Train Stations

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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An early reading has been passed of a bill aimed at restricting sales of strong beer, in a move that could hit brewers for a second time following a hike in excise duties last year.

The State Duma said it passed an initial draft of the bill that could limit sales of beer stronger than 5 percent as part of the state's drive to cut down on alcohol abuse.

It must pass two more readings and win Kremlin approval to become law.

If passed, the bill would ban the sale of strong beer altogether from outdoor kiosks, airports and train stations. Shops would have to stop selling it between 11 p.m. and 8 a.m.

The move is likely to erode brewers' sales growth, which has slowed since the country raised excise duties by 200 percent in January last year.

Danish brewer Carlsberg, owner of Russia's best-selling beer brand Baltika, this week warned

of modest growth and squeezed margins.

SABMiller told Reuters last year that 2010 would be its third straight year of falling Russia sales.

"Beer stronger than 5 percent is not a very large share of the market, so the consequences of these restrictions will not be catastrophic," a Baltika spokesman said, although he added that it made up about a third of the company's portfolio.

Russia has been seen as a high-growth emerging market for global brewers seeking to expand out of increasingly health-conscious developed nations.

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