

# Putin Gets Tough on 'Extortion Masquerading as State Service'

By [The Moscow Times](#)

March 05, 2013

**The  Moscow Times**

President Vladimir Putin said Tuesday that all government investigations into businesses must first be cleared with prosecutors to prevent "extortion often masquerading as state service," Interfax reported.

He told the Prosecutor General's Office that it should look into every alleged violation of property rights, abuse of office or unauthorized inspection of a business by a government official.

He also said prosecutors should tend to the growing number of complaints regarding housing and utilities, adding that the number of grievances in these areas grew 16 percent last year, to more than 212,000.

"You shouldn't wait for people to start complaining and justifiably ask what the prosecutors are doing. You should be aware of the situation and subsequently react properly," Putin said.

Prosecutors should also more closely monitor compliance with workplace safety, the president said, adding that up to 4,000 people die every year due to accidents at work.

"Violations of labor safety rules are numerous and rather serious, first and foremost in the construction industry and the operation of hazardous facilities," he said.

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