

# Hundreds of Russian Coal and Oil Trains See 'Critical' Seaport Delays

By [The Moscow Times](#)

January 11, 2015



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Many trains with oil and coal cannot be unloaded due to bad weather and faulty equipment at ports in Russia's Far East, Northern Caucasus and northwestern regions, Russian Railways said in a statement late last week, calling the situation "critical."

More than 300 trains — a total of about 19,000 wagons — are affected, according to Russian Railways. This is a 20 percent increase over the same period last year.

The worst situation is at the Vanino port in the Far East, where 5,000 coal wagons stand idle because of faulty equipment, Russian Railways said.

Gusts of wind and a sudden drop in temperature in the Northern Caucasus have practically paralyzed operations at Novorossiisk's port and led to the temporary cancellation of ferry trips to Crimea across the Kerch Strait, the company said.

Russian ports have long struggled with unloading freight trains.

In 2010, Russian Railways blamed ports for failing to unload 260,000 wagons in a timely manner, or about a fifth of all freight rolling stock in Russia, in just the first half of the year.

Four years earlier the company said the operators of Murmansk's port were delaying unloading coal wagons and were damaging them by using outdated equipment.

While Russian Railways traditionally blames the ports for the delays, the ports in turn put the heat back on the rail monopoly, saying train deliveries are often behind schedule.

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