

Moscow's Air Pollution Drops As Coronavirus Lockdown Sets In

By [Daniil Galaydov](#)

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Concentrations of pollutants in the air fell almost instantly after the city's self-isolation order entered into force. **Sophia Sandurskaya / Moskva News Agency**

Air pollution in Moscow has significantly fallen as the coronavirus pandemic has pushed the city's 12 million residents indoors and shuttered all nonessential business, the pro-Kremlin Izvestia newspaper [reported](#) Friday.

The Russian capital has [ranked](#) as one of the most polluted cities in the country due to heavy traffic congestion which releases toxic fumes. Mayor Sergei Sobyenin ordered a strict citywide stay-at-home regime starting Monday in a move to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

Concentrations of pollutants including carbon monoxide (CO) and sulfur dioxide (SO₂) in the air fell fivefold almost instantly after the self-isolation order entered into force, Izvestia [reported](#), citing the city's environmental watchdog Mosekomonitoring.

Moscow monitoring compared emissions levels from Monday and Tuesday with those seen last weekend, before the lockdown went into force.

Average CO concentrations decreased by at least three times in the city center alone, the watchdog said.

Breathing polluted air has been linked to a number of health problems including stroke, heart disease and lung cancer.

Anatoly Tsygankov, the department head at Russia's state weather and environment service (Roshydromet), told The Moscow Times that the city's lockdown and widespread shutdown of businesses has made the air noticeably clearer.

"It is quite visible for everyone, especially for those who live on the upper floors of apartment buildings. If you look at the city from above, it is apparent that the [atmosphere] has become clearer," Tsygankov said.

Yevgeny Tishkovets, the leading meteorologist at the Fobos weather center, told The Moscow Times that the lockdown has "absolutely" affected the city's environmental situation, describing the coronavirus as "a kind of janitor" for the atmosphere.

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Vladimir Chuprov, an ecologist for Greenpeace Russia, pointed to similar reductions in air pollution seen in China, where the coronavirus originated, as well as in [major European cities](#) after the continent became the epicenter of the pandemic.

Chuprov explained that cars and public transport generate heat and greenhouse gas emissions, creating "a kind of 'dome' over large cities like Moscow."

"Moscow's average temperature will level off with the weather in the Moscow region" now that there are fewer cars on the road, he said.

He warned that any environmental benefits would only be "temporary," however.

"When the quarantine is lifted, when sources of emissions emerge again – this 'dome' will be restored very quickly."

Moscow is the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak within Russia, with nearly 3 out of 4 of the country's confirmed cases registered in the capital. Russia has reported 4,149 coronavirus infections nationwide.

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