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Ecology: Black Spots on the Map of Russia

The U.S. ecological organization Blacksmith Institute released its annual list of the ten dirtiest places in the world. MB>As usual, the Russian cities of Norilsk and Dzerzhinsk are on the list and, as usual, city officials there reacted sharply to this renewed attention. Chernobyl, Ukraine; Sumgait, Azerbaijan; Linfen and Tianying, China; Sukinda and Vapi, India; La Oroya, Peru; and Kabwe, Zambia, share the list with the Russian cities. Rudnaya Pristan, Maritime Territory, which was on the institute's 2006 list, is not present this year.

The number of people endangered, the hazardousness of the substances involved and their health effects are considered in the compilation of the list. According to the organization 20 percent of deaths in the cities in the top ten list are caused by the effects of pollution.

Norilsk, a center of nickel mining and heavy metals processing, is polluted with particulates, sulfur dioxide, heavy metals, phenols and hydrogen sulfide. "It is getting easier to breathe in Norilsk every year," city council member Leonid Solomakha pointed out, however. Elena Kovaleva, deputy public relations director of [Norilsk Nickel](#), around which the city was founded, stated that "Norilsk is not a garden city yet, and won't be one until 2015, when our ecological program is implemented." Blacksmith Institute noted Norilsk Nickel's cooperation with the organization and its ecological program with approval. According to the institute, progress is already perceptible.

Dzerzhinsk is one of the centers of the Russian chemicals industry (and chemical weapons industry in Soviet times). Improperly stored chemical wastes have led to pollution from Sari and VX gases, phenol, lead and a number of other substances. Acting Mayor of Dzerzhinsk Alexey Khilov stated, echoing the response of city officials last year, that the ecologist's report was made "on order." "If we found out who ordered it, we would file suit," Khilov said. He suspected that someone "does not like it that Dzerzhinsk is being considered as one of the possible location for production facilities for [Peugeot Citroen](#) and the Finnish company Stora Enso intends to invest \$1.5-2 billion in paper production."

Khilov noted that Blacksmith Institute representatives did not conduct research in the city. An official institute spokesman told [Kommersant](#) that its representatives were not allowed into the city.

Oleg Mitvol, deputy director of Rosprirodnadzor, the federal environmental watchdog, noted that "It is impossible to deny the ecological problems in Norilsk and Dzerzhinsk." [Greenpeace](#) Russia representative Alexey Kiselev cast doubt on any improvements in Rudnaya Pristan and mentioned Monchegorsk and Miass as other Russian cities with critical ecological situations.

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