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Russian freeze traps ships



The winter is harsh even by Russian standards



Defrosting a frozen radiator : Cold comfort from frozen radiators



Icicles on building



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Thursday, 9 January, 2003, 01:34 GMT



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Poor heating leaves many Russians shivering

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Across Russia about 23,000 people in some 20 towns are struggling without heating, as old or overused heating systems break down in record low temperatures.

Russian news agencies report that thermometers plummeted to **-37C** in the Moscow suburbs overnight on Tuesday, while the Arctic port of Murmansk registered temperatures of **-48C**.

Russian television showed images of iced-up radiators and windows, with residents bundled in blankets to try to keep warm.

Homeless at risk



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In the capital six people froze to death overnight.

According to the Emergencies Ministry, almost 240 people, mostly homeless and elderly and often drunk, have frozen to death in Moscow since the beginning of winter.

BBC correspondent Caroline Wyatt said that several bodies had been recovered from the streets of the capital.



Icicles on building

Average winter temperatures for Moscow normally hover around -10C.

Moscow's meteorological bureau has forecast a rise in temperature for the city and surrounding area over the next few days.

But it warns that the bitter weather may return next week.

The Itar-Tass news agency said 10 people died from cold and 66 were hospitalised with frostbite over the Orthodox Christmas holiday.

On the far eastern island of Sakhalin, meanwhile, six people have been killed in a three-day snowstorm.



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Severe winter weather in Russia has trapped about 40 ships in the icy Gulf of Finland, near the city of St Petersburg.

Officials said that eight ice-breakers had been sent to the area, but so far they had not been able to clear a safe passage for the ships.

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