

# Gas Supply to the Balkans Stopped

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The supply of natural gas to Bulgargaz was stopped on the Romanian-Ukrainian border at 3.30 a.m. There was no prior warning.

The supply was stopped for Bulgarian market as well as for the transit to Greece, Turkey and Macedonia, the Ministry of Economy and Energy announced. Natural gas feed to Bulgaria was stopped without notice. The reasons for the stopped supply have not been specified and it is not clear when the supply will be restored, the CEO of Bulgargaz, Dimitar Gogov announced on a special press conference. Central heating companies in the country started preparation for switching to alternative resources (oil residue). A new balance was prepared for redistribution of the natural gas available to secure the work of the heating companies and the companies with continuous production cycle.

The production of the gas repository in Chiren was increased to 4, 3 million cubic meters per twenty-four hours in order to cover the minimum of the country's needs.

Valentin Terziiski, president of the Association of Central Heating Companies stated in Hoziront radio programme that the process of heating the oil residue reserves had started tonight - but switching to oil residue required three days of technical preparation. "We do not expect reduction of the temperature of heating" for consumers, Terziiski said.

As a result of the critical situation and in order not to allow break-downs in production, the Security and Crisis Management Council was summoned at 7 a.m. this morning to by the Minister of Economy and Energy Petar Dimitrov.

The council appointed a crisis staff under the guidance of deputy minister Galina Tosheva which is to observe and analyze the situation and to collect data form major natural gas consumers about the possibilities for switching to alternative fuels. The crisis staff will work without interruption looking for solutions for particular sites for which the cut off may be critical. Minister of Economy Petar Dimitrov added that at the moment attempts were made for a direct contact with the governments in Russia and Ukraine.

BGNES tried to get in touch with Gazprom's press service for a comment but there was no reply. Today Russia celebrates Christmas which is a national holiday.

Mediapool reports the supply will be compensated through other routes via Belarus, Poland and Turkey. Bulgaria on the other hand does not have diverse supply routes and the import via Romania is the only way for the fuel to come to our country.

Minister Dimitrov hopes that the problem will not continue for a long time as it is more of a political than an economic issue. According to him, Ukraine and Russia should find a solution to the problem faster, since they jeopardize the energy systems of dozens of countries: "A solution should be found with the shortest possible delay".

In 10.00 o'clock Prime Minister Sergei Stanishev summons an operational meeting in the Council of Ministers. Meanwhile the Ministry of Economy and Energy pleads that all natural gas consumers in the country reduce their consumption or switch to alternative energy resources if possible.

From Yesterday:

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The government has a ready plan for coping with the gas crisis. That became clear after a meeting of Prime Minister Sergei Stanishev with the Minister of Economy and Energy Petar Dimitrov, the manager of the Energy Holding Galina Tosheva and the CEO of Bulgargaz Dimitar Gogov in the first working day of the new year, 5 days after Ukraine reduced the supply of the fuel with 10-15%, BNT reported.

The repository in Chiren compensates the reduced supply and can secure the amounts needed till the end of the heating season. Minister Dimitrov started talks with major industrial consumers of natural gas to temporarily reduce the amounts used.

Dimitar Gogov - the chief executive of Bulgargaz stated on Monday that "We are on the line but thanks to the work of the Bulgarian systems for gas transportation our consumers do not feel restrictions. With the operation of Chiren we cover the overall consumption of the country at the moment. In case of consumption increase, since Chiren already operates to its maximum and cannot increase its daily production, there will be a gas insufficiency."