

Federal Inquiry Opened After Trees Die by Volgograd Bridge

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Prosecutors are looking into the possible misuse of state funds after hundreds of pine trees planted around an infamous "dancing bridge" in Volgograd died soon after planting because they had no roots.

The city contracted two local companies, Stroimarket and Stimul, to plant the trees around the bridge in 2009, the Prosecutor General's Office [said](#) Tuesday.

But most of the trees died soon after the companies received the payment of 5.6 million rubles (\$200,000) because "all the saplings were seriously damaged at the time of planting," the prosecutor's office said on its web site.

A check found that the pines literally had no roots, Volgograd district prosecutor Alexander Rasstrygin [told](#) Komsomolskaya Pravda.

He did not explain why officials waited until 2011 to open a case, but said the suspects face fraud charges, which could land them in prison for up to five years.

The seven-kilometer bridge across the Volga River became a nationwide phenomenon soon after its opening last year when videos hit the Internet showing it wobble up and down about one meter, sending cars bouncing.

The Audit Chamber reported last July that 152 million rubles (\$5.4 million) of state money was used "improperly" during the 13-year construction of the bridge. Several other inquiries followed, but no officials or constructors have been charged with wrongdoing. The bridge remains open to traffic.

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