

Arrests Made in Market Fire That Killed 18

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An investigator taking pictures outside the southwest Moscow warehouse where an early morning fire killed 18.

Two arrests were made Wednesday during the investigation of a fire that killed 18 workers at a construction materials market a day earlier, Interfax reported.

Police Wednesday arrested Vladimir Lykov, general director of the company Start-2 and owner of the two-story metal building where the workers died. He is suspected of violating fire safety laws, but investigators are still determining exact charges. He can be held for 48 hours before the charges are announced.

Later in the day Sedrak Stepanyan, owner of the company Albaset that rented the now-gutted building where the fire raged, was also arrested.

"This organization rented and operated the warehouse where the fire occurred and organized work for illegal immigrants," a representative of the Investigative Committee told NTV.

The fire at the Kachalovsky market began just before 5 a.m. Tuesday and burned for over two hours before it was extinguished, but not before consuming a building where emergency services discovered the bodies of 18 workers.

A law enforcement source told Interfax that the workers were effectively trapped in the metal structure, fitted to house the workers.

"The dead workers at the the Kachalovsky market lived in metal structures fitted with insulation materials. Inside they slept in terribly crowded conditions on double-decker bunks installed in two tiers. There was no direct exit onto the street from the structure," the law enforcement source said.

The victims, citizens of Tajikistan, were not registered at the address where the fire took place, Federal Migration Service spokeswoman Zalina Kornilova said. She said the workers were employed as warehouse loaders.

The cause of the fire is still unknown, but law enforcement officials speculated the cause of the fire could have been a faulty heater used to dry clothes.

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