

First Sentence in Perm Fire

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The co-owner of a Perm nightclub where 156 people died after a pyrotechnic show ignited a bamboo ceiling was sentenced to six and a half years in a prison colony Monday.

Khromaya Loshad, or "Lame Horse," co-owner Konstantin Mrykhin was also required to compensate victims of the fire in the amount of more than 200 million rubles (\$6.6 million) for moral and material harm, the Investigative Committee said in a statement on its website.

The trial has been highly emotional, with victims' relatives shouting and cursing at the defendant and the court. A group of about 15 people left the courtroom in protest as the sentence was read out, RIA-Novosti reported.

Mrykhin's trial on charges of offering services in violation of safety laws resulting in death carried a maximum sentence of 10 years.

He fled Russia shortly after the nightclub incident and was hiding in Spain until his arrest and extradition to Russia in June 2011.

This is the first sentence of eight people charged in connection with the fire, including

pyrotechnics experts, regional fire inspectors, and club owners and managers. Only club co-owner Anatoly Zak remains in custody.

The 2009 fire occurred Dec. 5 after a pyrotechnic show ignited the ceiling, which was covered in highly flammable materials in violation of safety codes. Patrons were only able to escape the club through a single exit accessible through a narrow stairway.

Footage of the incident recorded by a club-goer showed the fire begin as sparks flashed behind a decorative wooden panel on the ceiling. People began to push their way toward the exit as the fire spread rapidly across the room. People who made it onto the street could be seen stripping off their burning clothing.

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