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2 Dead, 7 Injured in Gas Explosion

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The apartment building, a part of which blew up around 5 a.m. when a resident lit a cigarette, is to be torn down.

Two people died and seven were injured early Tuesday morning when a gas blast ripped through a three-story apartment block in a Chuvashia republic village.

Regional emergency officials gave the ages of the dead as 60 and 16 in a statement on their official website. Two of the injured are being treated in a local hospital.

According to preliminary information, the explosion occurred when a resident of the apartment block in the village of Tuvsi woke up around 5 a.m. and lit a cigarette. The Chuvashia branch of the Emergency Situations Ministry suspects that a leaky gas stove was at fault.

Investigators have already opened a criminal case on charges of causing the death of two or more people by violating fire-safety rules. The charges carry a maximum sentence of seven years in jail.

The blast completely destroyed four apartments in the 18-apartment block and knocked out

the front section of the building, Interfax reported. Roughly 40 residents were evacuated to a nearby school and were attended to by emergency workers.

Chuvashia republic head Mikhail Ignatyev wrote on his official Twitter account that the families of those killed in the explosion would receive 1 million rubles ($33,000) in compensation.

Ignatyev said that the damaged apartment block would be torn down and that a new residential building would be erected in its place. Families affected by the blast will be offered residence in a building owned by the republic close to the village or resettled in Cheboksary, the republic's capital, he added.

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