

Short Circuit Blamed for Blaze at Grozny's Tallest Building

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The 40-story Olimp residential tower, Russia's tallest building outside Moscow, erupted in flames Wednesday. **Musa Sadulayev**

A short circuit in the air conditioning system sparked an overnight fire in Grozny's tallest building, causing a spectacular display of flames and smoke but no injuries and apparently no permanent damage to the foundation, investigators said Thursday.

The fire broke out Wednesday evening on the fourth or fifth floor of the 40-story Olimp residential tower, part of the Chechen capital's sparkling showcase Grozny City complex, in the city center.

Several hundred firefighters and other emergency officials rushed to the scene, evacuating about 30 people from the building, which is the tallest residential high-rise in Russia outside of Moscow.

The fire spread over 18,000 meters before it was extinguished around 1:30 a.m., the Emergency Situations Ministry said.

A preliminary investigation found that the fire was started by a short circuit in the air conditioning system on the outside wall of the building. The fire then spread rapidly because the building's facade was constructed of highly flammable material and the building's emergency water pipelines meant for use in fires were empty of water, a senior Emergency Situations Ministry official, Yury Deshyovikh, said on Rossia-24 television.

Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, who has pumped huge amounts of cash into rebuilding Grozny, which was destroyed in two wars in the past two decades, voiced relief that no one was injured in the blaze.

"For me, one person's life is worth more than any building," he said on Twitter.

Kadyrov, who was not in Grozny when the fire started, is traveling in the United Arab Emirates this week, including for a horse race.

Chechnya's chief firefighter, Musa Yasuyev, said the fire mostly inflicted damage to the building's facade. "Now I can say with full assurance that the foundation of the building itself was not damaged. The fire did not penetrate the building," he said in comments carried by Interfax. "Also we managed to avoid any casualties. There were no victims."

The Grozny City complex consists of seven skyscrapers: the 145-meter-tall Olimp residential tower, two 30-story residential buildings, two 18-story residential buildings, one 30-story five-star hotel and one 30-story office tower. The other buildings were not damaged by the fire.

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