

Veteran Bobsledder Set Alight by Faulty Olympic Torch

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Olympics torchbearers are expected to be many things, but flame-retardant isn't one of them — or at least that was the case until a fiery accident befell Olympic veteran Pyotr Makarchuk as he bore a Sochi 2014 torch through his home republic of Khakasia.

In a [video](#) released Wednesday by LifeNews, the torch appears to drip flame on bobsledder Makarchuk's jacket, which immediately caught fire.

Olympic staff who were monitoring the torch's journey through Abakan, the capital of Khakasia in south-central Siberia, quickly put out the flames and gave Makarchuk new apparel.

The bobsledder then continued his leg of the journey. It is unknown whether the veteran of the Turin and Salt Lake City Winter Games suffered any injury.

This is hardly the first equipment mishap to disrupt the Olympic relay. Media reports in October said that a 13-year-old girl in Kostroma was burned when a faulty Olympic torch exploded in her hands.

Dmitry Chernyshenko, head of the Sochi 2014 organizing committee, later denied the claims.

The torches have also gone out on dozens of occasions. A clip that showed a man relighting the torch with his Zippo cigarette lighter drew particular attention when the lighter manufacturer used the footage as advertising, drawing complaints from the Sochi Olympic organizing committee, who said that Zippo was not authorized to use Sochi-2014 imagery.

In October, the All-Russia People's Front announced plans to complain to the Investigative Committee regarding the torches' deficiencies and asked why so much money — a total of 207 million rubles (\$6 million) — had been spent on them, according to statistics from Vedomosti.

"Any normal person will have at least a few questions. Why were 16,000 produced? How much does each torch cost and is this price appropriate? And finally, why don't they work?" said Mikhail Starshinov, State Duma Deputy and member of the Front's coordination council.

Prior to their tour, officials had heralded the torches' sturdiness.

"Our torches don't go out in wind speeds of up to 60 kilometers an hour and temperatures of up to minus 50 degrees Celsius. There are versions of the torch which burn underwater," Chernyshenko told Itar-Tass on the day before the first torch was lit in Greece.

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