

Deadly Derailment in Moscow Metro (Video)

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At least five emergency helicopters buzzed over Park Pobedy as dozens of emergency vehicles shuttled law enforcement and investigators to and from the scene.

Emergency helicopters hovered over Moscow's Park Pobedy on Tuesday, airlifting the victims of a fatal metro derailment that claimed the lives of at least 21 people and injured 160 others.

Three metro cars skidded off the rails at about 8:40 a.m. between the Slavyansky Bulvar and Park Pobedy metro stations on the Arbatsko-Pokrovskaya Line in western Moscow.

Three metro cars skidded off the rails of the Moscow Metro during Tuesday morning's rush hour, claiming the lives of at least 21 people and injuring 160 others.

Though hundreds of Moscow's 9 million daily commuters were initially trapped in the mangled metro cars, only one injured passenger remained ensnared in the wreckage on Tuesday evening, RIA Novosti reported. At the time of publication, 127 people — 42 of whom were described as in critical condition — were being treated at Moscow hospitals.

President Vladimir Putin offered his condolences to the families and friends of the victims of the country's most serious metro accident in recent years and ordered Alexander Bastrykin, the head of the Investigative Committee, to launch a criminal investigation into the incident.

See the photo gallery: [Deadly Derailment in Moscow Metro](#)

The Investigate Committee has yet to identify the cause of the accident but has excluded the possibility that it was the product of an act of terrorism.

Evacuation efforts were concentrated at the exit of Park Pobedy station. At least five emergency helicopters buzzed over the city's iconic park as dozens of emergency vehicles shuttled law enforcement and investigators to and from the scene.

Workers in protective suits periodically emerged from the station, lugging drills and equipment to cut through metal. A Russian Orthodox priest was also on the scene to provide counseling services to the injured, their families and rescue crews.

The Moscow Times arrived on the scene as the last of the victims were being airlifted to hospitals across the city. In the hours following the accident, Moscow's busy Kutuzovsky Prospekt was jammed with commuters unable to get to work using the metro.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin said the city would observe a day of mourning on Wednesday, and that those responsible for the tragedy would be harshly punished.

A Technical Error?

Moscow's Emergency Situations Ministry said the accident was thought to have been caused by a decrease in the electric voltage running through the metro tracks, a hypothesis the Investigative Committee has yet to confirm.

Service has been interrupted on the Arbatsko-Pokrovskaya Line between the Kievskaya and Molodyozhnaya stations. A Moscow police officer monitoring the rescue operations — who wished to remain anonymous as he was not authorized to speak to the press on the matter — told The Moscow Times that "loads" of technical issues would need to be resolved before service could resume.

Moscow authorities said that service was expected to resume within two days. A free shuttle service was provided between the closed stations. Three taxi companies likewise offered free service to affected commuters on Tuesday.

Sergei Gruzd, the editor-in-chief of "Transport Safety and Technology," a periodical published by the Russian Transportation Ministry, told the Moscow Times that investigators would have to investigate a series of different factors that could have contributed to the accident.

"It is too early at this point to determine a precise cause of the accident," Gruzd said. "It could be related to problems with the automatization of transportation, to an issue with the cars or the tracks. It could also stem from a structural problem left behind by construction or renovations. A human error, of course, could also have played a role."

The Arbatsko-Pokrovskaya Line of the Moscow metro is serviced by Rusich metro cars, which have been produced since 2003 at the Metrovagonmash factory in the Moscow region. Observers have remarked that Rusich cars do not seem as robust as the older cars used in most of the metro, which date back to the 1990s or even the Soviet era. Maxim Liksutov, the head of Moscow's Department for Transport and Road Infrastructure, told the press that the metro cars that serviced the Slavyansky Bulvar and Park Pobedy metro stations had undergone routine maintenance, Interfax reported.

In an interview with Gazeta.ru on Tuesday, Vyacheslav Babochkin, a former plant worker at Metrovagonmash, said he had discovered technical issues in the brakes of the Rusich cars. Babochkin, who claimed to have been fired for pointing out the cars' technical flaw, said his superiors had failed to pay attention to the cars' technical shortcomings.

A History of Tragedy

Since January, 13 technical problems have been recorded that interrupted service in the Moscow metro. Two of the incidents were deadly. Ten such incidents were recorded in 2013, but none resulted in casualties.

In June 2013, a power cable caught fire between the Biblioteka Imeni Lenina and Okhotny Ryad stations in the heart of Moscow, causing heavy smoke. Fifty people suffered injuries and thousands of commuters were evacuated.

The metro system was not immune to technical accidents in the Soviet era. In 1981, seven commuters perished in a fire at Oktyabrskaya station. The following year, eight people were killed and 30 injured when the escalator collapsed at the Aviamotornaya station.

The Moscow metro has also been targeted in several acts of terror. More than 100 people have been killed in metro bombings since 1977. The most recent attacks occurred in March 2010, when two bombs were detonated within the same hour on the Sokolnicheskaya line. Chechen terrorist leader Doku Umarov, who was reported dead by the FSB in March, claimed responsibility for the attack that claimed the lives of 40 people and injured more than 100.

"The Moscow metro station is no more dangerous than any other underground worldwide," Gruzd said. "But, of course, not everything is ideal."

The 12 lines of the Moscow Metro are dotted with 194 stations. More than 50,000 commuters pass through the majority of these stations each day.

See also:

[At Least 21 Killed in Moscow Metro Rush-Hour Crash](#)

[Victims of Moscow Metro Crash Eligible for up to \\$58,000 Compensation](#)

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