

Russian Firefighters Incite Outcry With Selfie at Burning Mall

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Two Russian firefighters are facing disciplinary measures for taking a selfie in front of a burning shopping mall in Kazan during a major fire that claimed at least 17 lives.

The photo, published online last week, shows two men in firefighting gear smiling at the camera against a backdrop of flames. It evoked outrage among social media users.

"This is what firefighters were doing during the fire. I am frightened now," one social media user said in reaction to the selfie, in a comment widely shared by Russian media.

The Emergency Situations Ministry in Tatarstan, where Kazan is located, denounced the photo in a statement Sunday and sought to defend its other employees, Interfax reported.

"The absolute majority of Emergency Situations Ministry employees perform their work skillfully and effectively. But one negative case can cast a shadow over everyone else," the ministry was quoted as saying in its statement.

"Negative actions of specific employees of the ministry should not be used to judge the work

of the agency as a whole." The photo is being investigated, and the two men may face disciplinary action, the statement said.

The blaze at Kazan's Admiral shopping mall broke out last Wednesday, reducing what used to be a behemoth structure in the city center to a pile of ash and rubble. At least 17 people died in the incident, according to the Emergency Situations Ministry.

Several Russian civil servants have got into trouble for an on-the-job selfie in recent months.

Last year a surgeon in the city of Nizhny Tagil was fired after a nurse posted a selfie online in which the surgeon could be seen operating on a patient.

Earlier this month a paramedic in the city of Kirov was also fired after several selfies of her goofing off on the job appeared online. One of the photos showed the woman making an obscene gesture at an apparently unconscious man in the back of an ambulance.

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