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At Least 16 Dead in Russian Bus Crash, More Than 50 Injured

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Emergencies Ministry members work at the site of a collision between two passenger buses on the highway between Khabarovsk and Komsomolsk-on-Amur near the Gassi lake in Khabarovsk region, Russia, Aug. 5, 2015.

At least 16 people were killed and more than 50 others were injured Wednesday when two buses collided head-on in far eastern Russia, officials said.

The Investigative Committee, the nation's top investigative agency, said the collision occurred on a highway linking Khabarovsk, on the border with China, and Komsomolsk-on-Amur. The agency has opened an investigation into alleged violations of traffic rules.

Prosecutors said the driver of one of the buses drove into an oncoming lane to bypass vehicles of a road repair crew and lost control. The bus hit an oncoming bus and overturned.

Russia's Health Ministry said 56 people were injured. Ambulances and helicopters rushed to the site to evacuate the wounded, more than 20 of whom were in grave condition.

President Vladimir Putin offered condolences to the victims' families and ordered officials to work out new measures to ensure traffic safety. "Major accidents with a large number of victims have become far too frequent on our roads," he said at the start of a Cabinet meeting.

Deputy Interior Minister Viktor Kiryanov reported to Putin that the bus driver allegedly violated the speed limit and a construction company in charge of road repairs had failed to place warning signs at a required distance.

Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov also suggested further toughening the punishment for driving drunk, saying that drivers found guilty should have their vehicles confiscated.

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