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Russian Governor Declares Mourning Period After Yaroslavl Explosion

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The regional governor in Yaroslavl has declared a three-day mourning period starting Wednesday after the deaths of seven people, including two children, who perished in a gas explosion that collapsed a section of a residential building, Russian media reports said.

Governor Sergei Yastrebov ordered flags to be displayed at half-staff, and canceled all celebrations ahead of the Feb. 23 Defender of the Fatherland Day, the TASS news agency reported. The governor also urged the local broadcaster to cancel all entertainment programming, his spokesman Alexander Shikhanov was quoted as saying.

The explosion on Yaroslavl's Zheleznodorozhnaya Ulitsa in the small hours Tuesday collapsed an entire section of a five-story residential building.

A resident of a neighboring section of the building said he "woke up because the bed flew up to the ceiling," the RIA Novosti news agency reported.

Seven people, including two children, were killed, a spokesperson for the Emergency Situations Ministry was quoted by RIA Novosti as saying. The search and rescue operation was

declared completed by late afternoon Tuesday, the spokesperson said, RIA Novosti reported.

Earlier, emergency workers reported rescuing several survivors from under the rubble, including a woman who had been in touch with rescuers by phone while she remained trapped under the debris, Russian media reports said.

All residents were evacuated from the remaining sections of the building, as rescue workers feared the structures could also collapse, media reports said.

Investigators believe the explosion originated from a second-floor apartment, whose occupant left his gas stove on, state-run television reported.

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