

Emergency Calls Ignored in Russian Summer Camp Tragedy

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Police have opened a criminal investigation into a nurse who reportedly ignored emergency calls from children following a fatal accident at a Russian summer camp, the Slon news website reported Friday.

The nurse, who was based at the Suoyarvskiy central district hospital in Russia's northern republic of Karelia on June 18, reportedly failed to respond to a phone call from campers after their boat overturned on the Samozero lake.

The group of 47 children from the Samozero summer camp, aged between 12 and 17, had been rafting when the party was hit by a sudden storm. Fourteen children died following the incident, many freezing to death in the cold water.

On receiving the call, the nurse did not notify the police or the Emergency Situations ministry, and did not make any official record of the call, said Investigative Committee representative Vladimir Markin.

“All of this contributed to delays in starting a search and rescue operation, which ultimately led to the death of children ” said Markin.

“She thought that the children were playing around. The line wasn’t good, and she heard children’s voices,” said spokesperson for the Karelian Health Ministry, Yelena Kokovurova.

“She thought they were joking. We get a lot of those sorts of calls,” she said, the Interfax news agency reported.

The charge of negligence causing the death of two or more people carries a sentence of up to seven years imprisonment.

Five people have been arrested following the incident, including the camp director. Media reports claim that instructors had ignored bad weather warnings and had neglected to notify local authorities of the trip.

Karelian officials found a number of health and safety violations when visiting the camp in 2015, but did not hold management responsible, Markin said. Inspectors found sanitary problems at the camp, as well as inadequately organized activities for the children.

The private summer camp hosted 2,500 children each year, selling three-week packages for 30,000 rubles (\$450). The camp was also regularly used by Moscow authorities to provide trips for children in social care.

The camp has since been closed.

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