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Russia Uncovers Illegal Cache of Methanol in Irkutsk

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Russian consumer rights watchdog Rospotrebnadzor has found a warehouse in Irkutsk containing 13,500 liters of illegal windshield washing fluid, the Interfax news agency reported Tuesday, citing an official statement.

The liquid contains 500 times the allowable levels of methanol, and may help shed light on the origins of a recent wave of poisonings from "surrogate alcohol" in the city.

According to Rospotrebnadzor, the fluid was manufactured in Moscow. The company that owned the windshield washing fluid did not have legal documents required for its production.

All 13,500 liters have been seized by local branches of the Internal Affairs Ministry and the Federal Security Services.

Earlier this month, Irkutsk made headlines when scores of people died from consuming boyaryshnik, a hawthorn berry- and ethyl alcohol-based cosmetic used in much of Russia as

an inexpensive substitute for vodka. However, in Irkutsk, investigators discovered that the batch of boyaryshnik contained highly toxic methanol instead of ethyl alcohol.

Currently, the death toll from the mass poisoning stands at 77.

On the heels of the tragedy, Rospotrebnadzor implemented a month-long ban on the sale of non-food products containing alcohol.

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