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Gas Explosion Injures 8 Children in Siberian Shopping Mall

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Investigative committee of Russian Federation / Youtube

Eight children were injured in a mall fire caused by a gas explosion in Siberia on Friday, months after scores of children were killed in another mall fire in Siberia's Kemerovo.

More than 60 people, most of them children, were killed in a fire in March caused by faulty wiring mixed with combustible materials at the Winter Cherry mall in Kemerovo. Subsequent inspections uncovered lax safety standards in up to half of Russia's shopping centers.

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In Irkutsk 1,600 kilometers east of Kemerovo, eight children were hospitalized with burn wounds after a scientific experiment went wrong at the local "KomsoMALL" shopping center Friday. The accident took place during a Children's Day show in a play area on the third floor of the mall, the Komsomolskaya Pravda tabloid reported.

“During the show, a flammable gas outburst hit the gas burner and ignited for a short time,” Irkutsk investigators said in an online statement.

The fire reportedly hit children sitting in the front row, aged 5 to 13, who were then admitted to receive treatment at a municipal hospital.

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A 10-year-old boy was placed in intensive care with second-degree burns, investigators said.

The technical director of the company that rents space at the mall and the guides who took part in the ill-fated experiment have been arrested as part of an investigation into violations of safety standards.

“The children were running out burned and screaming in pain. It was a terrible sight,” Komsomolskaya Pravda quoted one of the witnesses as saying.

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