

Oxygen Shortage Deaths Lead to Dismissals, Resignations in Southern Russia

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Rostov-on-Don's administration has suggested that a leak may have caused the shortage. **Sergei Chirikov / EPA / TASS**

Two senior health officials in southern Russia have left their positions after the start of investigations into the deaths of several coronavirus patients due to an [oxygen shortage](#) in a hospital, authorities said Tuesday.

Russia's health watchdog said last week it was investigating claims by hospital workers and officials in the city of Rostov-on-Don that 13 patients died when their oxygen supplies ran out on Oct. 11. The watchdog, Roszdravnadzor, said following the scandal that it will ask all 85 Russian regions to [report](#) any medical oxygen shortages at hospitals.

Rostov region's health minister Tatyana Bykovskaya retired in the wake of the scandal, the regional authorities [said](#), while the head of the city's healthcare management Nadezhda Levitskaya was fired, the city's news website 161.ru [cited](#) municipal authorities as saying.

Related article: [Russia to Probe Virus Deaths Caused By Oxygen Shortage](#)

Rostov-on-Don's administration has [denied](#) disruptions to the supply of oxygen at the city hospital and suggested that a leak may have caused the shortage.

One of the two physicians who worked the evening shift at the hospital's Covid-19 wing on the day in question [recounted](#) a tense two hours of critically low oxygen levels followed by complete depletion in an interview with the investigative newspaper Novaya Gazeta.

"Patients immediately panic and try to get oxygen from elsewhere, gasping for air like fish pulled out of the water," anesthesiologist Artur Toporov said.

"We talked to them," Toporov, 27, told Novaya Gazeta. "There was nothing else we could help them with."

Rostov is Russia's sixth most-affected region, with 29,683 Covid-19 cases and 789 deaths confirmed by the national coronavirus information center.

Russia has reported record numbers of new infections and deaths over the past week as disease experts warn that the regions could see a second wave that is 10 times worse than the first.

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