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Russia Probes Coronavirus Hospital Oxygen Supply Deaths

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Kursk and Rostov are two of the scores of regional cities with poorly funded healthcare systems that have been hit hard by the second wave of the Covid-19 outbreak. **Sophia Sandurskaya / Moskva News Agency**

Russian authorities are investigating the deaths of 14 coronavirus hospital patients after an oxygen equipment breakdown last month, authorities and state media said Wednesday.

Some 40 intensive care patients were moved in early November from a maternity ward converted into a Covid-19 hospital in the city of Kursk south of Moscow after an oxygen supply malfunction was detected.

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"Within a few days, 14 patients died because they were in serious condition," the state-run TASS news agency quoted regional prosecutors as saying.

Federal inspectors uncovered unspecified maintenance violations in the oxygen supplies and opened an administrative case against hospital administrators, the prosecutors were cited as saying.

Investigators opened a criminal case into manslaughter, which carries a prison sentence of up to four years, the Kursk branch of Russia's Investigative Committee said.

In October, authorities in the southern Russian city of Rostov-on-Don opened an investigation into the deaths of several Covid-19 patients due to a hospital oxygen shortage. Two senior health officials have resigned or been dismissed in the wake of the scandal.

Kursk and Rostov are two of the scores of Russian regions with poorly funded healthcare systems that have been hit hard by the second wave of the Covid-19 outbreak this fall. Russia's far-flung regions account for 70% of active Covid-19 cases.

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