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Russia Detains 2 After Huge St. Petersburg Fire

By AFP

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The six-story Nevskaya Manufaktura building was located on the right bank of the Neva River in Russia's second city. **Emergency Situations Ministry**

Russia on Tuesday detained two people after a huge fire gutted a historic factory in St. Petersburg, as firefighters continued putting out the blaze.

On Monday, a fire broke out over several floors of the red-brick Nevskaya Manufaktura building in Russia's second city. The inferno killed one firefighter and left two more hospitalized with serious burns.

The fire continued burning into Tuesday over an area of 500 square meters, the emergencies ministry said, adding that nearly 40 firefighters were involved in extinguishing the blaze and clearing the debris.

Related article: Firefighter Killed in Massive Blaze at Historic St. Petersburg Factory

The Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, said that it launched a criminal probe into a death caused by negligence and added that law enforcement had detained the general director of Nevskaya Manufaktura and his deputy.

Investigators cited a "number of violations" regarding fire safety and said that management "knew for a fact" that the premises could not be operated.

They estimated the total area of the blaze at some 4,000 square meters, causing a large part of the roof to collapse and even spreading to nearby trees.

Listed by the St. Petersburg city government as a cultural heritage site, the building was home to one of Russia's largest textile companies in the 19th century.

In recent years parts of the building continued to operate manufacturing cloth, while others were rented out as office space and some areas had been abandoned.

Fires are relatively common in Russia due to dilapidated infrastructure or non-compliance with safety standards.

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