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Ventilator Suspected as Fire Kills 3 at Russian Hospital

By AFP

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Three people died from carbon monoxide poisoning and seven others were hospitalized after the fire broke out in a ward for coronavirus patients. **Alexander Ryumin / TASS**

Three people have died in a fire at a hospital in the Russian city of Ryazan, investigators said Wednesday, with local authorities suggesting the blaze was caused by a faulty ventilator.

The fire broke out in the intensive care unit of a state hospital in Ryazan, about 200 kilometers (120 miles) southeast of Moscow, at around 3:30 a.m. local time on Wednesday, the local branch of the Investigative Committee said in a statement.

Three people died from carbon monoxide poisoning and seven others were hospitalized, it said.

A probe has been launched on suspicion of "causing death by negligence."

Investigators said the cause of the fire was being established, but the governor of Ryazan

region said it was likely caused by a ventilator.

"In one of the wards of the intensive care unit there was a patient in serious condition on a ventilator," governor Nikolay Lyubimov told state TV.

"Apparently, the ventilator caught fire," he said.

Lyubimov said that the ventilator was of Chinese origin. It was not adapted for use in Russia and was not protected against "voltage surges and short circuits," he said.

State news channel Rossiya 24 reported that one of the hospital's nurses was in serious condition with burns affecting 70 percent of her body.

It said that the fire broke out in a ward reserved for coronavirus patients.

Several people died in May 2020 in fires at hospitals in Moscow and St. Petersburg, with faulty ventilators believed to have sparked the blazes.

The model of the ventilator used by both hospitals was later recalled by its manufacturer.

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