The Moscow Times
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Russia Detains Doctor After Oxygen Rupture Leaves 9 Covid Patients Dead

August 10, 2021



Emergency oxygen supplies were delivered to the hospital in Vladikavkaz on Tuesday following the disaster. **Olga Smolskaya/TASS**

Russian authorities have detained the head doctor at a coronavirus hospital where an oxygen supply failure led to the deaths of nine patients, state-run news agencies reported Tuesday.

An oxygen pipe ruptured Monday at the Republic Clinical Hospital of Vladikavkaz, in the North Ossetia region, cutting out vital supplies to Covid-19 patients who were on ventilators in an intensive care unit, leaving nine patients dead.

Russia's Investigative Committee told the state-run TASS news agency Tuesday it had detained the hospital's chief doctor, an unnamed 58 year-old man, as part of an investigation into the incident.

The agency reported he is suspected of providing services that failed to meet safety requirements and resulted in the deaths of the nine patients.

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Two more patients on the same ward died overnight following the disaster. The region's acting head Sergei Menyaylo said they succumbed to critical lung damage, not as a result of the disruption to oxygen supply. Announcing the probe into the disaster, Menyaylo said Monday it was "too early" to say whether the incident was responsible for the initial nine fatalities, as the patients were already in a critical condition.

Russia's Health Ministry said 71 patients were in intensive care at the time of the accident, including 13 on ventilators. All 11 of the victims were on ventilators, with up to "90% lung damage," Menyaylo said.

Russia has seen a number of accidents in its coronavirus hospitals lead to the deaths of patients during the pandemic.

In June, three people died in a fire at a hospital in the Russian city of Ryazan southeast of Moscow, with a faulty ventilator believed to be the cause of the blaze.

Several people also died in May last year in fires at hospitals in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, with faulty ventilators likewise believed to have sparked the blazes.

AFP contributed reporting.

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