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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

1 Dead, OBI Store Destroyed in Massive Moscow Mall Fire

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Daria Sokolova / TASS

A massive fire at one of Russia's largest shopping malls has killed one person and burned down a formerly German-owned home improvement store in northwest Moscow, emergency officials and state media reported early Friday.

The fire, which broke out before dawn, engulfed 18,000 square meters of the MEGA Khimki mall at its peak. It was eventually contained at 7,000 square meters two hours later.

Videos of the blaze accompanied by powerful explosions inside the German home and garden retailer OBI's section of the mall were widely shared online.

"The building's structural features and a large combustible load complicated efforts to extinguish the fire," Russia's Emergency Situations Ministry said in a social media update.

Embed:

> Жуткие кадры горения и взрывов в гипермаркете OBI в Химках.
>
> Причиной пожара стали сварочные работы в пристройке в здании. МЧС подтвердило смерть одного человека при пожаре, предварительно – это охранник.https://t.co/uwZHymikxa#пожар #OBI #Химки #МЕГА pic.twitter.com/wWMDI935Dk
>
> — @kpru (@kpru) December 9, 2022

“The fire spread rapidly over a large area due to the formation of strong convection currents from the collapse of the roof and instant access to oxygen,” it said.

One person was killed, state-run news agencies reported, citing emergency officials. Moscow region prosecutors later identified the victim as a MEGA Khimki employee, while other news outlets said he was likely a security guard.

News agencies that spoke with emergency services in the northern Moscow suburb of Khimki said possible causes ranged from a short-circuit to arson.

Arson was later ruled out by state agencies' sources.

Investigators have opened a criminal case into safety violations in connection with the fire.

TASS news agency reporters on the ground said OBI was “almost completely destroyed,” with only load-bearing walls remaining upright. They noted that the fire had not spread to the rest of the shopping center.

OBI announced its exit from Russia this spring over the invasion of Ukraine. Russian media reported at the time that OBI’s Russian and German managers were in a dispute over reopening stores.

The Emergency Situations Ministry said it had not recently conducted fire safety inspections at OBI due to a federal moratorium that the Russian government extended this spring.

The All-Russia Insurance Association (ARIA) estimated damages at up to 30 billion rubles ($480 million).

MEGA Khimki said it will remain closed on Friday.

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