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Russian Official Jailed Over 10 Years for Mall Fire Tragedy

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Alexander Mamontov, formerly Head of the Emercom Office for the Kemerovo Region Kuzbass. **Maxim Kiselev / TASS**

A senior emergency official has been sentenced to 10.5 years in prison over a mall fire that killed 60 people more than five years ago, Russia's Investigative Committee said Tuesday.

The Winter Cherry mall fire in the Siberian city of Kemerovo claimed the lives of 37 children and 23 adults when it broke out due to faulty wiring through a children's play area and cinema in March 2018.

Thirteen people, including the mall's former co-owner, its managers, building inspectors, firefighters and a security guard, have already received prison sentences ranging from five to 18 years on a range of charges in 2021-22.

On Tuesday, a Kemerovo court found the former regional emergency chief, Major-General Alexander Mamontov, guilty of negligence and misappropriation and handed him a 10.5-year sentence in a penal colony.

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Mamontov's subordinate, lieutenant colonel Grigory Terentyev, was found guilty of negligence and fraud and sentenced to 8.5 years in prison.

The aftermath of the deadly Winter Cherry fire exposed a litany of failures in fire safety procedures.

One of them, a two-year moratorium signed by President Vladimir Putin to release small businesses from safety inspections, raised concerns that malls around the country were also at risk of burning down.

Fire safety violations are common in Russia due to corrupt practices of exchanging building permits for bribes.

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