The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Residents, Rescuers Killed in Gas Blast Outside Moscow

September 20, 2023



The aftermath of Wednesday's gas explosion in a Balashikha. **Maxim Grigoryev / TASS**

Updated with Thursday's death and injury count.

Several residents and rescue workers were killed when a gas explosion ripped through a late Soviet-era apartment building outside Moscow, authorities and state media reported Wednesday.

Russia's Emergency Situations Ministry said first responders arrived soon after being alerted in the early morning of an incident in the suburb of Balashikha, northeast of Moscow.

Footage shared by the ministry shows a gaping hole in the facade of the nine-story building's third, fourth and fifth floors.

Rescue crews were seen digging through the rubble before a second partial collapse was reported.

Embed:

The overall death toll stood at seven dead and 27 injured after rescue workers finished digging through the rubble by early Thursday, Russia's Emergency Situations Ministry said.

At least 170 residents were evacuated from the building.

Russia's Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, launched an investigation into safety violations and carried out searches at the utility company that provided gas to the building.

Gas explosions are common in Russia and often affect residential buildings built in the Soviet era.

The damaged apartment building was built in 1979, with major repairs next scheduled for 2025, according to TASS.

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