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Russia Arrests Gold Mine Director After Collapse Traps Workers

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Rescue and search workers at the Pioneer mine. **Russian Emergencies Ministry**

The managing director of a gold mine where 13 workers have been trapped for a week has been arrested over safety violations, investigators in Far East Russia's Amur region said Monday.

"The managing director was detained in the Amur region on suspicion of violating safety requirements during operations at the Pioneer mine," said the local branch of Russia's Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes.

It did not identify the managing director by name, though previous reporting has identified him as Alexei Biryukov.

Video released by the Investigative Committee showed the managing director with a blurred face being informed about the charges against him and escorted by masked and unmasked law enforcement agents.

He faces up to seven years in prison if found guilty.

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Rescuers have been unable to establish contact with the 13 Pioneer miners since the rock collapse on March 18.

Citing an unidentified emergency service source, Russia's state-run news agency TASS reported Monday that the miners have likely drowned from flooding.

"A borehole exploration has shown water at a depth of 153 meters. The remaining parts of the mine are likely also flooded," the source was quoted as saying.

Rescuers have also been evacuated from the mine due to the risk of another collapse, TASS cited its source as saying.

According to RIA Novosti, 1,000 cubic meters of rock have collapsed over the last 24 hours.

Lax safety measures have often led to deadly accidents in Russian mines and factories.

Pioneer is one of the world's largest gold mines and one of the most productive in Russia.

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