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19 Killed in Bootleg Alcohol Poisoning in Russia's Leningrad Region

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Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency

At least 19 people have died this month after consuming bootleg alcohol in northwestern Russia's Leningrad region near the border with Estonia, authorities said Friday.

National police spokeswoman Irina Volk said two local residents were detained on suspicion of supplying raw alcohol and using it to produce homemade spirits.

"A resident of the village of Gostitsy is suspected of selling alcohol-containing liquid to fellow villagers," Volk wrote of the first detainee on Telegram.

"A little later, his acquaintance from a neighboring village, who had allegedly sold raw alcohol to the pensioner, was detained," she added.

The Leningrad region's administration said at least 19 deaths have been registered across the southwestern Slantsevsky district in September.

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Eight of the deaths have been confirmed as methanol poisoning, it added.

Media reports claimed investigators were examining whether industrial alcohol was used in the fatal poisonings.

Authorities have opened a criminal case of death by negligence, according to the regional prosecutor's office.

It said a court is expected to rule on placing those arrested into pre-trial detention.

Local media outlet 47news reported, citing anonymous sources, that one of the spirit producers was a 79-year-old who had been fined in 2019 for selling diluted alcohol at cut-rate prices.

State-run news outlets claimed the person suspected of supplying raw alcohol for production was a 60-year-old kindergarten worker.

Russia has faced repeated waves of deadly surrogate alcohol poisonings, often involving methanol-laced or industrial-grade spirits.

Such incidents are typically driven by poverty, limited access to legal alcohol, and the persistence of underground suppliers in rural areas.

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