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Over 120 Fall Ill in Buryatia Food Poisoning Linked to Local Retail Chain

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More than 120 people have fallen ill in Russia's Siberian republic of Buryatia following a mass food poisoning outbreak linked to ready-made meals sold in a regional supermarket chain, local health officials told media.

The regional branch of Russia's consumer rights watchdog Rospotrebnadzor told the Kommersant business newspaper on Monday that the number of confirmed cases had risen from 89 to 121 in less than a day.

Around 70 people remain under medical supervision in the regional capital of Ulan-Ude, where residents began seeking treatment over the weekend for symptoms of acute intestinal infection. Earlier tests confirmed 11 cases of Salmonella.

The outbreak has been traced to products made by the food manufacturer Vostok, which supplies about 2.5 metric tons of prepared meals daily to the Nikolaevsky grocery chain.

Inspectors reportedly found “gross violations of sanitary requirements” at the company’s production site, prompting a shutdown of its ready-made food operations and the seizure of 6.4 metric tons of products from stores and warehouses.

Related article: Food Poisoning Outbreak Hospitalizes 90 in Siberia’s Buryatia

The regional branch of Russia’s Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, said a Vostok production manager was charged with producing unsafe food that caused serious harm.

The woman was detained over the weekend as investigators collected evidence and conducted searches.

She could face up to six years in prison if found guilty.

A video released by the Investigative Committee showed one female employee inspecting crates of packaged food at a storage center and another writing up a report with the production manager seated in his office.

Officials said most patients are in stable condition as the investigation continues into what is becoming one of Buryatia’s largest foodborne illness outbreaks in recent years.

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