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Sauna Owner in Kemerovo Region Placed in Pre-Trial Detention After Fire Kills 5 Teenagers

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The sauna in Prokopyevsk. **ugra-news.ru**

A court in Siberia's Kemerovo region has placed the owner of a sauna in pre-trial detention after five teenagers were killed there in a fire during a birthday party over the weekend.

The five victims, ages 15 to 17, died from smoke inhalation on Saturday evening. A sixth teenager, a 16-year-old girl, survived after managing to escape the fire.

The Investigative Committee, Russia's top investigative body, opened a criminal investigation into health and safety violations at the sauna in the coal-mining city of Prokopyevsk. Alexei Dolgachev, the sauna's owner, faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted.

A judge at the Central District Court in Kemerovo ruled Monday to keep Dolgachev in pre-trial detention until March 31.

Investigators said they were considering pressing charges against his brother and co-owner

of the sauna, Pavel Dolgachev.

Alexei Dolgachev had reportedly turned himself in to the authorities and pleaded guilty to some of the charges.

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A court earlier on Monday placed the sauna's manager, identified as 36-year-old Yelena Selishcheva, under house arrest.

Investigators accused Selishcheva of adding firewood and coal to the furnace while "leaving the teenagers unattended and failing to monitor the temperature."

"Shortly thereafter, a fire broke out in the building," the Investigative Committee said, noting that the victims were unable to evacuate safely as the flames and smoke spread.

This is the third deadly scandal to rock the Kemerovo region in less than a month.

Last week, authorities launched sweeping inspections at more than a dozen mental health hospitals in the region following the deaths of nine patients at one facility in Prokopyevsk. The head of the mental health hospital was placed on temporary leave.

That incident came after a judge ordered the closure of a regional maternity hospital following the deaths of nine newborns there in short succession. Police arrested the hospital's chief physician and acting head of intensive care.

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