

= 2010 Shanghai fire =

The 2010 Shanghai fire was a fire on 15 November 2010 that destroyed a 28 @-@ story high @-@ rise apartment building in the city of Shanghai , China , killing at least 58 people and injuring more than 70 others ( with at least one source reporting more than 120 others injured ) .

An investigation under the PRC State Council was announced on 16 November , the day after the fire , to determine the cause of the blaze . A preliminary finding by investigators concluded that sparks from welding work being done on the building , undertaken by unlicensed welders , ignited scaffolding around the structure , which led to the apartment 's destruction . The municipal government also placed the blame on illegal multi @-@ layered subcontracting , and detained four managers from several construction companies . In all , sixteen individuals have been arrested in connection to the fire , including four others accused of being unlicensed welders .

The week after the fire , city officials announced a compensation plan for victims of the fire and their families . The fire also prompted the government to pass stricter regulations on the construction industry , as well as increased fire safety inspections . Some citizens have criticized the government , accusing it of censoring the media and providing an inadequate response to the fire .

= = Fire = =

The fire began at 2 : 15 pm local time ( 06 : 15 UTC ) around the tenth floor . The building , constructed in 1997 , was located at the intersection of Jiaozhou Road and Yuyao Road in Shanghai 's Jing 'an District , and was being renovated at the time of the fire . Witnesses said that the fire started with construction materials and spread throughout the building . It took over 80 fire engines and several hours to contain the fire . Shanghai residents were able to see smoke from the fire several kilometres away . Firefighters were unable to hose water on the top of the 85 metres ( 279 ft ) -tall building from the ground .

China Youth Daily reported that the contractor for the construction said the cause of the fire was probably sparks caused by welding work done on the 20th floor . Qiu Jingshu , a worker on the 18th floor , said sparks from welding being done on another building flew over and caused the scaffolding to catch fire . Afterward , it was established that the fire " was caused by unlicensed welders improperly operating their equipment " , and several welders were arrested .

= = = Rescue efforts = = =

Firefighters were able to save over 100 people out of 156 families living in the high @-@ rise apartment building . According to Al Jazeera , the fire began at the scaffolding that surrounded the building , but spread to the complex 's main building of around 500 apartments . Xinhua News Agency said the fire was contained at about 6 : 30 pm local time ( 10 : 30 UTC ) , more than four hours after it began .

Three helicopters had been called in to assist in the rescue , but were prevented by thick smoke generated by the fire . The upper portion of the building was beyond the reach of fire apparatus ; the blaze was brought under control only after firefighters set up hoses atop a nearby building . In all , 25 fire stations and over 100 fire appliances were mobilised in response to the incident .

Television coverage of the event showed people holding on to scaffolding around the building , and some were able to climb down to safety . One worker on the 28th floor said that workers were adding insulation to the building when the fire broke out .

Victims not in hospitals , as well as evacuees from three surrounding city blocks , were sent to public buildings , including a school and a stadium , until their housing situation could be addressed .

= = Casualties = =

The building housed around 440 people , mainly retired teachers . An early report showed that the

ages of those injured in the fire range from 3 to 85 , with the majority ( 64 @. @ 5 % ) over the age of 50 . Most of the injured appeared to be elderly residents or children , and it was confirmed that the youngest victim of the fire was 16 months old . A firefighter said that 57 of the 58 killed had died inside the building .

Earliest reports put the death toll at eight , but Xinhua later revised the count several times , and then finally confirmed 53 deaths . 26 bodies were identified using DNA tests . Some media outlets reported 79 fatalities by adding the number of identified victims to the number of previously reported fatalities , although Xinhua later said that the 26 identified were included amongst the 53 .

As of 24 November , 58 people ( 22 males and 36 females ) were officially reported dead while 56 people remained missing . The Global Times reported that , as of 28 December 2010 , 71 people had been injured , and 36 were still missing . Of the deceased , 57 were identified by DNA tests early on , while one male , from Japan , was still being identified when the official death count was released .

A doctor at Shanghai 's Jing 'an Hospital said that over 20 people injured in the fire had been admitted , many suffering from asphyxia caused by smoke inhalation . State media reports said the hospital was treating 55 survivors , including nine in serious condition . At least 70 people , and possibly more than 120 people were reported to have been injured . According to BBC News , people who survived the blaze were searching hospitals for missing family and friends . As of 24 November , 66 wounded people , 14 of which were in critical condition , were being treated at seven area medical centers . In all , nine hospitals received victims of the fire .

The list of the dead was not released as the victims ' families wanted privacy . Authorities said more than one @-@ third of the families did not want the names of the deceased published . However , several newspapers listed some of the names of the dead . The artist Ai Weiwei compiled an unofficial list of the victims ' names by contacting their relatives , along with officials and journalists . He claimed that the actual death toll was two more than the official count , but authorities did not provide access to the list of casualties .

= = Response = =

= = = Investigation = = =

Meng Jianzhu , the Minister of Public Security , went to Shanghai to manage rescue operations . Jing 'an officials set up temporary lodging and food at area hotels , and some survivors stayed at a gymnasium overnight . After the flames were extinguished , the Shanghai Municipal Government held a press conference about the damage caused by the fire . Liu Jinguo , Vice Minister of Public Security , described the firefighting as " a successful model " , leading to a dispute by Chinese netizens . Later in the week of the fire , government officials began a drive to increase fire and safety inspections at buildings and construction sites . They also said that improvements would be made to the city 's firefighting capabilities .

Local residents said that fire safety requirements at the high @-@ rise were lax , and that workers often tossed used cigarettes into the building 's hallways . Week @-@ long safety inspections were done on the two other buildings of the apartment complex , both of which were unharmed . The several hundred people living in those buildings were expected to be allowed to move back on 20 December 2010 . Until then , the survivors would live in 17 nearby hotels .

According to Ming Pao , family members of the victims were dissatisfied with the official investigation and held a sit @-@ in protest , calling for a fair judgement . Some locals blamed the official rescue work by comparing it with a large emergency response exercise on a 330 @-@ meter building several days before , and the successful firefighting for a blaze at Shanghai World Financial Center in 2007 . Others blamed an ineffective firefighting system for the high death toll , and were dissatisfied that they were not given more details about the fire .

In Beijing , authorities halted renovation projects similar to the one being done on the apartment in Shanghai shortly after the blaze . The projects , intended to save energy by installing insulation ,

were stopped on 19 November , pending safety evaluations of the work . The insulation is still flammable , despite the use of fire retardants . Shanghai officials temporarily stopped such renovations after the fire , but later allowed them to resume .

On 20 December 2010 , the mayor of Shanghai , Han Zheng , said that the city would crack down on unfair practices of construction companies and contracting firms . Han said that there is little regulation of the construction industry and that certain companies have had advantages over other companies when being awarded contracts . On 11 January 2011 , Shanghai authorities placed into effect a new set of regulations aimed at better official supervision of construction companies . The city will also require that such companies will not be permitted to have any non @-@ official relationship with local government offices after one year . Some media organizations had been questioning the connections between Jing 'an District 's government and the contracting groups involved in the fire , leading to accusations of corruption .

= = = Compensation = = =

On 23 November , it was announced that the families of each victim of the fire would receive 960 @,@ 000 yuan in compensation for the ordeal . The compensation would include 650 @,@ 000 yuan for every death and 310 @,@ 000 yuan in financial assistance from the government and charities . Zhang Renliang , the top official of Jing 'an District , said that Shanghai residents and foreign workers would be compensated equally . Survivors of the blaze would be fully compensated for the loss of possessions and property . Some who lost relatives in the disaster , however , were not satisfied with the announcement . They said that the compensation plan was not enough to pay for another apartment in the district , and that would rather have a new apartment than the money .

= = = Media censorship allegations = = =

Hong Kong @-@ based Sing Tao Daily and Singapore @-@ based Lianhe Zaobao reported that four journalists from Xinjing News ( ??? ) , China Daily , Reuters and a local newspaper were detained for one hour as security forces demanded a guarantee for positive news coverage by the journalists , before they were to interview families of the victims at a funeral parlour . The reporters wrote about their detainment on two websites .

A Chinese webmaster said that the authorities demanded for Chinese websites to cut down on their reporting of the fire , and only allowed usage of the official Xinhua news source . The New York Times reported that Chinese website Huasheng Online was blocked by government censors after criticizing the country 's real @-@ estate industry .

= = Responsibility = =

Han Zheng said on 22 November that the city was largely responsible for the disaster . He said , " Poor supervision of the city 's construction industry was one of the causes behind the high @-@ rise apartment building fire . And we are responsible for that . " Willy Wo @-@ Lap Lam , a professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong , said Han was trying " to do some damage control to dispel anger and to comfort the families of the victims and the Shanghai people . " Luo Lin , chief of the PRC State Administration of Work Safety , blamed the fire on illegal employment methods , poor project oversight , and incompetent , inexperienced workers .

On the day following the fire , Meng Jianzhu said he wanted an investigation into the fire to determine who was responsible for it , so those at fault could be punished appropriately . He told rescue officials to be meticulous in their efforts and that information regarding the fire should be released to the public . He also asked local governments across China to take preventative measures against such fires , including building inspections . A team of investigators , led by the State Administration of Work Safety , was formed under the PRC State Council to look into the incident . Many details about the " November 15 Relief and Rehabilitation Working Team " have not been publicly announced .

The investigation into the fire made a preliminary conclusion that negligence by unlicensed welders on the tenth floor caused the bamboo scaffolding and attached nylon netting to catch fire , which subsequently spread to the entire structure . Shanghai authorities detained eight individuals on 16 November , at least four of whom were accused of being unlicensed welders . As of 19 November , a total of twelve individuals were being held by officials in connection to the blaze , including four more who were detained that day . The four were representatives of Jiayi Building Decoration , a part of renovation contractor Jing 'an Construction , Shanghai Jing 'an Construction Supervision , and the apartment management company .

On 24 December 2010 , Shanghai officials announced that three government employees had been taken into custody in connection with the fire . Those detained were accused of abusing their authority to permit illicit construction practices to occur . The three were reported to be Gao Weizhong , director of Jing 'an 's construction and transportation commission ; Zhang Quan , of the commission 's main office ; and Zhou Jianmin , of the organization 's construction department .

= = = Cause of fire = = =

The fire may have been caused by the accidental ignition of polyurethane foam insulation used on the building 's outer walls . In China , the foam is commonly used as insulation material without the addition of flame retardants , and the foam produces toxic gases and carbon monoxide when burned . The Beijing Television Cultural Center was said to have used polyurethane insulation , which magnified the ferocity of a 2009 fire that consumed the center . In a 24 November press conference , local authorities said that the two apartments next to the destroyed building would be renovated as well , and that foam cladding on their exteriors would be replaced switched out in favor of fire @-@ resistant materials . Chinese citizens have also questioned the lack of an indoor fire sprinkler system in high rise buildings .

= = Public mourning = =

Local citizens put flowers and wreaths near the site , and offered prayers around the destroyed building . Mourners , including Government officials , came bearing chrysanthemums . At one point , the crowd stretched around 250 metres ( 820 ft ) down the road .

According to Xinhua , about 10 @,@ 000 people attended a public mourning at the site on 21 November , seven days after the fire ; mourners left large amounts of flowers surrounding the burnt building . The seventh day after death is the day that Chinese people believe the souls of the dead return to their relatives before departing , and mourners at the site burned paper and made a feast for the deceased , in accordance with Chinese tradition . During the event , the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra played " Ave Maria " and monks recited s?tras at a local temple .

On 19 December 2010 , the 35th day following the fire , authorities were reported to be detaining mourners who were visiting the site . According to Chinese legend , souls of the dead also visit humans 35 days after death , but police were taking mourners away on buses . Local officials did not provide an explanation for the event .