

= 2013 Rosario gas explosion =

A gas explosion in a residential area of Rosario , the third @-@ largest city in Argentina , occurred on August 6 , 2013 . It was caused by a large gas leak ; a nearby building collapsed , and others were at high risk of structural failure . Twenty @-@ two people died , and sixty were injured . Several organizations helped secure the area , search for survivors and aid people who lost their homes . Shortly after the explosion , the time needed for reconstruction was estimated at six months .

The provincial judiciary launched an investigation into the cause of the explosion . Primary suspects were Litoral Gas (the natural @-@ gas provider for Rosario) and an employee who carried out maintenance work at the building that day . Several public figures sent condolences , and most of the candidates for the 2013 primary elections suspended their political campaigns .

= = The event = =

The explosion occurred at 9 : 30 a.m. near the intersection of Oroño and Salta Streets in central Rosario . Initial reports confirmed eight people dead , sixty injured and fifteen missing ; eight more deaths were later confirmed . Searches the following day revealed twelve fatalities , ten of whom were identified . A number of people were missing ; some were found dead among the debris , while others were rescued . The search for survivors ended on August 13 , with twenty @-@ two people confirmed dead . A 65 @-@ year @-@ old woman who had been injured died on October 8 .

The explosion was caused by a gas leak in a 30 @-@ year @-@ old building . It severely damaged a nearby nine @-@ story apartment building , causing it to collapse . Mónica Fein , mayor of Rosario , asked residents to avoid the area because of the risk that more buildings might collapse , and to ease the work of disaster management personnel . The streets were covered with broken glass from damaged buildings . Gas and electricity were immediately disconnected , and the national government sent an Argentine Federal Police task force to the scene .

The natural gas supplier , Litoral Gas , immediately began sealing the distribution pipe to the area . The Center for Ambulatory Medical Specialties of Rosario (Spanish : Centro de Especialidades Médicas Ambulatorias de Rosario) managed the information about the dead and injured , and tents were prepared for those left homeless . Firefighters and other workers found people trapped on the upper floors of buildings and evacuated them over adjacent roofs . Although the building was not destroyed by the explosion , a high risk of structural failure remained .

= = Investigation = =

Neighbors reported to the press that they had smelled a gas leak several hours before the explosion and had called Litoral Gas . Company director José María González said that the company had received no such calls , and thought that callers might have dialed the 911 emergency number instead . Prosecutor Camporini reported at the trial that the building had experienced several gas leaks before the explosion .

The provincial judiciary launched an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the explosion . The prosecution conducted a search and seizure at the offices of Litoral Gas to confirm the absence of customer complaints about the gas leak . Judge Juan Carlos Curto ordered the arrest of Carlos Osvaldo García , an employee of the department responsible for gas service to the area . He was captured during the night , and his assistant Pablo Miño surrendered to police the following day . According to witnesses , one employee fled in a van before the explosion , when he realized the severity of the gas leak , while another remained to try to evacuate people from the endangered area . The van belonged to García , who experienced an acute stress reaction during the trial . Curto checked the remnants of the gas employee 's workshop to verify García 's testimony .

Prosecutor Graciela Argüelles said that , according to the investigation , Litoral Gas ignored calls for help from García , who was not properly trained to manage such a situation . The judge suggested that documents seized from Litoral Gas might prove the existence of customer reports of a gas leak

. Curto thought that the employees might not bear sole responsibility , and that the liability of Litoral Gas had to be investigated as well .

Pablo Miño was released from prison , but Curto refused to release García , saying that Miño had extenuating circumstances which García did not . Miño 's job was to give García the required tools , not to do the maintenance . He was in the street , watching over the van , which was not properly parked and locked , and did not see García 's work before the explosion . Curto stopped short of pronouncing Miño innocent at that early stage .

As the case expanded beyond his jurisdiction , Curto recused himself from the trial and was replaced by Javier Beltramone , who released García from prison . Litoral Gas demanded Beltramone 's recusal for expressing an opinion about the case to the press . The appeal court agreed in a 2 ? 1 vote to remove Beltramone , and the case was transferred to Patricia Bilotta . García had claimed that he was following instructions received in the days before the explosion , so Bilotta summoned the technical officers of Litoral Gas to clarify that point . Litoral Gas said that García had not received any instructions prior to the explosion .

Litoral Gas proposed an out @-@ of @-@ court settlement to the relatives of the victims , offering about 1200 US dollars per square meter of collapsed building , in addition to compensation for loss of life . Vice Governor Jorge Henn rejected it as immoral , and most of the families also initially rejected the proposal . By May 2014 , however , almost half of the families had accepted the settlement .

= = Reaction = =

The explosion occurred shortly before the primary 2013 Argentine legislative elections on August 11 . The governor of Santa Fe province , Antonio Bonfatti , asked the political parties to end their campaigns to allow mourning for the victims of the explosion . The Front for Victory and Progressive , Civic and Social Front candidates suspended their campaigns , and the national government declared two days of mourning . The period of mourning was observed by all candidates in Buenos Aires and most other provinces , who ended their political campaigns .

President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner , who had recently returned from a diplomatic visit to the United Nations , visited the site of the explosion on August 7 . She was berated by local residents ; some were angry because her surprise visit halted work at the site , and others thought her presence was politically motivated . The president stayed briefly , visited the CEMAR and met Bonfatti . Kirchner 's entourage was surrounded by members of La Cámpora , who tried to prevent demonstrations against her and keep journalists and residents at bay .

Weeks before the explosion , several social networking sites had scheduled a country @-@ wide cacerolazo (a pot @-@ banging protest demonstration) , known as 8A , against Kirchner for August 8 . The websites had already conducted successful cacerolazos (8N and 18A) . Despite the national mourning , the 8A protest went ahead as planned , with the added slogan " No more pointless deaths " . Candidate Ricardo Gil Lavedra thought the cacerolazo should have been canceled , as the campaigning was , but fellow candidate Rodolfo Terragno supported it . It was attended by fewer people than previous ones in Buenos Aires and the rest of the country . The demonstration in Rosario was not a cacerolazo , but a silent candlelight vigil attended by nearly a hundred people . There was a second demonstration in Rosario on August 22 , proceeding from the National Flag Memorial to the headquarters of Litoral Gas .

Pope Francis sent a letter of condolence to Archbishop José Luis Mollaghan of Rosario , and it was read during a mass and procession for Saint Cajetan at Plaza 25 de Mayo . Newell 's Old Boys and Rosario Central , two local soccer teams and rivals in the Rosario derby , organized a charity match for the victims at the Gabino Sosa stadium , and Rosario @-@ born Lionel Messi provided support through the " Leo Messi " charity . The charity match collected 120 @,@ 000 pesos . Musicians Fito Páez , Vicentico , Babasónicos , Las Pelotas , Chaqueño Palavecino , Ciro Pertusi , Lisandro Aristimuño , Pablo Dacal and Coki de Bernardis performed concerts in several Argentine cities to raise money for the victims .

= = Reconstruction = =

Bonfatti announced that Santa Fe province would provide financial help to the victims of the explosion . Since most houses in the vicinity were damaged , affected families would receive a subsidy of \$ 20 @,@ 000 to rent homes during reconstruction . They would receive \$ 50 @,@ 000 in credit to buy furniture and appliances , payable in 60 months with five percent interest . Rosario 's real estate firms prepared a list of houses for rent without charging victims their regular fee . Some of the affected buildings may have had cheap insurances which would not cover the risk of an explosion . Some cars trapped in an underground parking lot could not be retrieved .

When the search for survivors ended , authorities closed Salta Street . Engineers began checking the buildings at ground zero , trying to restore the original layout of the street and demolishing unstable structures . Secretary of Public Works Omar Saab said that the two remaining buildings were beyond repair and had to be demolished . As a sign of respect , the demolition would not be carried out with explosives . Secretary of Housing Gustavo Leone estimated that the work would take nearly six months . People were allowed to enter their destroyed houses in small groups at a time , starting on August 9 . Nearby streets began to be reopened on August 13 .

The CGT union signed a deal with the association of factories of Rosario and the government of Rosario to make sure that all the victims of the explosions would keep their jobs .