

Number of Samara Explosion Victims Rises to 60

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A woman watching an explosion at the Volga Federal Ammunition Testing Site in Chapayevsk, Samara.

Video showing people's reactions as they watch several explosions occur at the ammunition depot.

The number of people who have received medical attention following the explosions at an ammunition depot in the Samara region has risen to 60, medics working for the Emergency Situations Ministry said Friday.

One person was killed and more than 6,000 local residents were evacuated Tuesday after a fire caused massive explosions of stored artillery shells, the ministry said.

Since then, more than 5,000 people have returned to their homes, while psychologists have offered counseling to 600 people, Interfax reported.

The fire, at the Volga Federal Ammunition Testing Site in Chapayevsk, was followed by a

series of explosions that sent shrapnel to a distance of up to a kilometer from the site, according to the ministry.

Dmitry Blynsky, the mayor of Chapayevsk, told residents on Wednesday that it would only be safe to return home on Thursday, after the explosions started up again Wednesday morning.

On Wednesday afternoon, the Defense Ministry sent seven helicopters to the area to put out the fire — two Mi-8s, one Mi-26 and four unmanned aircraft. The explosions have since stopped.

The footage above shows drivers fleeing the area affected by the blasts as burning debris lines the side of the road.

A ministry spokesman said the depot stores some 6,000 122-mm artillery shells as well as other ammunition and explosives.

Prosecutors opened a criminal case over the incident, which caused an estimated 120 million to 150 million rubles in damages, according to Samara region Governor Nikolai Merkushkin.

The governor also said victims would receive compensation funds within a day, Rosbalt.ru reported.

More than 1,400 personnel and over 220 units of machinery and equipment were deployed to contain the fire and explosions.

The incident was the latest in a string of fires and explosions at munitions storage and disposal sites that have plagued Russia in the past two years.

Material from The Moscow Times is included in this report.

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