
In Kamchatka Territory, probe finished in death of three children in heating main



The Kamchatka Territory Office of the Investigative Committee has finished criminal proceedings against workers of the Kamchatka Heat and Power Plants, a branch of Kamchatskenergo, a public company – chief of the 1 section of heat networks, a foreman, two pipe-fitters and the head of the branch’s heat networks. All of them are charged with safety breach that entailed death of two or more people by negligence under Part 3 of Article 216 of the RF Penal Code.

On 28 January 2016, three 8-year-old boys never got home from school in the city of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky. Their bodies with extensive thermal burns were found the same day in a half-filled with hot water chamber of the heat network near a house in Pogranichnaya Street. The cause of the death was overheating.

According to investigators, a leak of water of 106 degrees Celsius appeared in a transition chamber of the heating main no later than 24 January 2016, and led to the collapse of a ceiling panel. The local emergency service started getting complaints about vapor billowing from underground. That required immediate repair and maintenance of the equipment to ensure its safe and reliable operation.

The investigators revealed that the heating main was repaired by repair teams of Kachatskenergo who arrived at the scene on 24 and 26 January 2016. The 47-year-old chief of the 1 section of heat networks was the one responsible for the maintenance of the heat network. On 26 January, the team

repaired the main with direct involvement and under supervision of the chief of the section. They pumped out water from the transition chamber, put a clamp on the delivery pipeline and patched the hole with the material they had at hand – a piece of chipboard. Obviously, that was not enough to repair the leak, however, no signs or a metallic fence indicating potential danger for local residents was put in place. On 28 January the three boys fell into the chamber of the heating main half-filled with hot water and died of overheating.

More than 200 witnesses were questioned, more than 10 forensic inquiries run, including those run outside Kamchatka Territory in central forensics facilities of Moscow. The scene, seized objects and documents, records of phone calls, video footage and other materials were thoroughly examined multiple times.

Following the breaches of norms regulating the heating main operation and repair protocol revealed during the probe, the investigators made requests to the branch of Kamchatskenergo to eliminate the causes and conditions that contributed to the crime. 19 workers were disciplined and 4 more, including the 3 accused were discharged.

Following instructions of the investigator in order to prevent similar tragedies, workers of Kamchatskenergo Kamchatka Heat and Power Plants checked 3,927 heat supply facilities paying special attention to those located near schools, playgrounds or other sites for children. 61 facilities were repaired.

On the initiative of the regional investigative authority some preventive steps were taken in schools in Kamchatka Territory. Off-schedule briefing on safe conduct of children on their way to schools and back home were held, maps of safe routes to school and back and an instruction regulating the conduct and actions of teachers in case of a situation that can be dangerous for children or school staff were made.

The investigators have enough evidence so the criminal case has been forwarded for the indictment to be signed and will then be referred to court.

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