
In Karelia, paramedic to stand trial for disregarded call from child from Syamozero tragedy



The Karelia Office of the Investigative Committee has finished criminal proceedings against ambulance paramedic of Suoyarvi Central District Hospital Irina Shcherbakova. She is charged with negligence under part 3 of Article 293 of the RF Penal Code.

According to investigators, on 18 June 2016, at 3:12 PM, the ambulance service of Suoyarvi hospital received a call from a 12-year-old child in Lake Syamozero. It can be clearly heard on the audio record confiscated by the investigators how with other children screaming in the background a scared child asks for help: “help us, we are in Karelia, save us please, we are drowning in a lake.” What happens next defies any logic. The woman on the other end of the wire cuts her short rudely and says that the conversation is being recorded and the number the child is calling from will be sent to police. The child seemed to have not believed what they heard and tried to ask to repeat “Pardon?”, but heard only busy tone in reply.

The investigators found out that it was the woman that had hung up on the child and had broken up children's hope for rescue as at that moment they were not yet aware that no help was coming. Meanwhile, there was a rescue team just 100 km away, which had all necessary equipment to sail the lake and start rescue operations. The investigators modeled the situation and concluded that the operations could have been started 18 hours earlier if the team had received that call.

While the children were waiting for the help to come, not only didn't Shcherbakova warn other emergency services, she concealed the fact of the call completely by not having reported it to her boss or having put it into the call log. A rescue operation was started only next morning after one of survivors had reached a village on the lake bank and had told local residents about the tragedy. To find the call record the investigators had to confiscate the server storing records of all calls coming to the ambulance service station. They studied the recording and filed it with the evidence.

The investigators interrogated witnesses, held face-to-face interrogations, including those involving the accused, carried out investigative experiments, searches and examinations in the ambulance service station and in the residence of the accused. The evidence gathered made up the basis for the indictment which has been signed and soon the case will be referred to court. The accused still admits her guilt only to a point saying that it was all a mistake.

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