Beat: Local

Death toll from China fireworks factory blast hits 13

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USPA News - The death toll from a large explosion at a fireworks factory in central China has risen to at least 13, local authorities said on Wednesday as investigators accused the factory owner of violating safety regulations. One other person remains missing.

The accident happened at about 3 p.m. local time on Monday at the Nanyang Export Fireworks Factory in the village of Baofeng, located near Liling City in central Hunan province. A total of 47 people were working at the factory when a large explosion occurred, destroying the complex and causing nearby houses to collapse. Li Zheng, a spokesman for the municipal government, said the death toll had increased to 13 while rescue work continued for one other person who remained missing. He said 30 factory employees and 3 passers-by were injured, including four people who were severely injured but had stable vital signs. All fatalities were factory workers. The news came as the State Administration of Work Safety revealed that an initial investigation showed that the factory was producing more than permitted and had failed to use the correct packaging. It said chaotic management and overcrowding at the site had caused additional casualties. "This accident has exposed serious illegal activities (among fireworks factories) and there are obvious loopholes on the part of local government safety regulations, and as such accidents and safety issues remain very prominent," the agency said. "Fireworks production has now entered its peak season, its accident-prone period, and to draw profound lessons from the accident, giving top priority to take effective measures to resolutely curb similar accidents, we have issued new safety requirements." Most firework-related accidents happen in China as it is the world`s largest manufacturer and exporter of fireworks. The majority of these accidents occur towards the end of the Gregorian calendar`s year when demand for fireworks is high in all parts of the world, but demand is also high for the traditional Chinese New Year`s holiday. An explosion at an illegal fireworks factory in southern India in September 2012 killed 40 people and injured 70 others, making it one of the worst ever disasters of its kind. And in October 2013, a total of 24 people were killed and nearly 100 others were injured when a series of explosions devastated a fireworks factory and a surrounding neighborhood in northern Vietnam.

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