

Deadly fire linked to unqualified workforce

People who died in a fire in the Beijing's Daxing district were poisoned by carbonic oxide from a newly installed underground refrigeration facility, authorities said.



A business owner transports mannequins on Tuesday in Xinjian village of Beijing's Daxing district, as the village demolishes illegal buildings in the wake of a deadly fire that claimed 19 lives on Saturday. [Photo/China Daily]

None of the 11 workers working on the refrigeration facility, including those wiring the electrical circuits and debugging the facility, were professionally qualified for their jobs, the local government said.

The blaze, which occurred in an apartment building with more than 400 residents on Saturday night, killed 19 people and injured eight others. Six of the injured who were hospitalized have been discharged. The police are still investigating the cause of the fire, district officials said at a news conference on Thursday.

Of the victims, eight were under 18 years old, with the youngest just 1 year. The oldest victim was a 60-year-old male. Most of the victims were from Shandong, Henan and Hebei provinces, which are home for many migrant workers.

The building, with a total floor space of 20,000 square meters, has two floors above ground in most parts and three in another part plus a basement.

A person identified only as Fan started building the structure in 2002.

Fan began installing the refrigeration facility in the basement in March. It was undergoing testing before the fire.

The police detained the refrigeration workers, as well as seven people who managed the apartment block.

Disciplinary watchdogs at the city and district level established a joint investigation group on Sunday, dispatching five teams to government departments to collect evidence. The group is also coordinating with the police to investigate how the building could have been built and used without any government objections, the authorities said.

Beijing ordered a 40-day citywide safety check following the fire.

Cai Qi, Party chief of Beijing, demanded that inspectors comb the capital inch-by-inch.

He also called for the rooting out of unqualified industrial compounds used for illegal business operations in rural areas of the city to ensure safety.

[Beidou joins global rescue data network](#)

China's domestically developed navigation satellite system Beidou has been included in a global network that collects and distributes data for search and rescue missions, the Ministry of Transport said on Thursday.

Beidou will be part of the International Cospas-Sarsat Programme, a nonprofit, intergovernmental and humanitarian cooperative with 44 members, including the United States, Canada, Russia and China.

The inclusion comes after a ministry delegation submitted the Chinese system's technology and launch plan for search and rescue to the program during the 31st Cospas-Sarsat Council meeting in late October in Montreal, Canada.

"The move will enhance Beidou's global capability to search for and rescue people in distress, showing China has carried out its responsibilities in global humanitarianism in accordance with international conventions," Wu Chungeng, a ministry spokesman, said at a news conference on Thursday.

"It also supports Beidou's global development, promoting the system's international influence and power in the field of satellite navigation," he said.

Beidou is the world's fourth navigation satellite system, following US-based GPS, Russia's GLONASS and the European Union's Galileo.

"China has mastered the core technology of space payload and ground systems for search and rescue satellite systems. It is time to research and develop the self-controlled search and rescue system with Beidou," Wu said.

The International Cospas-Sarsat Programme is a satellite-based search and rescue distress alert detection and information distribution system best known for detecting and locating emergency beacons activated by aircraft, ships and hikers in distress.

It aims to "provide accurate, timely and reliable distress alerts and location data to help search and rescue authorities assist people in distress". It uses the GPS, GLONASS and Galileo systems for its missions.

China has been striving to promote Beidou to more international organizations to expand the space network's use overseas, according to Ran Chengqi, director of the China Satellite Navigation Office.

He said China has begun to collaborate with GPS, GLONASS and Galileo on frequency coordination and ground applications.

"Beidou-based products are being used in more than 30 nations. Next, we will give the system global coverage and improve its stability and reliability. In addition, more efforts will be made to develop ground applications," he said.

Twenty-nine satellites have been launched for the Beidou network, the first in 2000 and the most recent in November. The system began providing positioning, navigation, timing and messaging services to civilian users in China and parts of the Asia-Pacific region in December 2012.

Beidou has acquired a great number of users in China. Most of the shared bicycles in Chinese cities now employ Beidou-based positioning services; more than 4 million taxis, long-distance buses and cargo trucks nationwide have been equipped with Beidou devices; and about 40 percent of smartphones in the Chinese market are able to access the services.

[Authorities investigate alleged child abuse](#)

Police and education authorities in Beijing are probing a child abuse case at the Xintiandi branch of RYB Education Kindergarten, a well-known chain of preschools.

This is the latest in a number of similar cases reported recently nationwide.

Several parents reported to police on Wednesday night that their children, all around 3 years old and enrolled at the company's Xintiandi branch, had needle marks on their bodies and were repeatedly fed unidentified white pills.

Police were investigating and collecting evidence.

Doctors and forensic experts also are participating, but so far no conclusion could be made, according to the Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau.

The education commission of Beijing's Chaoyang district, which oversees the kindergarten, said that it also is looking into the case and that three teachers have been suspended.

The Ministry of Education has begun a special inspection of the management of kindergartens nationwide and required local education authorities to take effective measures to improve teachers' morality and tighten supervision, according to a ministry release late Thursday.

RYB Education Kindergarten was China's largest early years education service provider in annual revenue last year, according to the Frost & Sullivan Report.

On Sept 27, RYB Education Inc, the kindergartens' parent company, rang the opening bell on the New York Stock Exchange, indicating it was the first independent enterprise to be listed in the early childhood education field. It's initial public offering was filed the day before.

RYB's stock price on the NYSE fell on Wednesday to \$26.71 a share, down by \$1.02, or 3.68 percent.

The NYSE was closed on Thursday for a national holiday.

This has been the third reported child abuse case in a month. On Nov 13, Shanghai police detained a person surnamed Zheng who was in charge of a day care center where staff were caught on camera abusing toddlers. Three other staffers were detained, according to Shanghai police.

Almost at the same time, Golden Cradle Education and Technology Group, which has more than 700 kindergartens and schools nationwide, also became involved in a similar accusation as parents said teachers at one of its kindergartens in Beijing abused children. Police are investigating, but so far no details have been released.

[China's unmanned helicopters pass](#)

high-plateau testing

Three unmanned helicopters made test flights recently on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, authorities said Thursday.

The AV500W conducted firing tests at an altitude of 4,300 meters in Qinghai Province on Nov. 18, according to Jiangxi provincial office of science, technology and industry for national defence.

At 4,600 meters above sea level, on Nov. 9, XM20 multi-rotor drone took off and landed with a full payload.

The AV500 climbed to an altitude of 5,006 meters during tests on Oct. 31, the maximum achieved by a domestically-made unmanned helicopter.

The three have applications in counter-terrorism, drug policing, border patrols, meteorology and mapping.

The aircraft were developed by a helicopter research and development institute in Jingdezhen, Jiangxi Province, owned by the Aviation Industry Corporation of China.

The institute began work on unmanned helicopters in 2004.

Chinese air force patrol South China Sea

The PLA air force recently conducted a combat air patrol in the South China Sea, said a military spokesperson on Thursday.

A team of various bombers completed the routine patrol, said spokesman Shen Jinke.

Chinese bombers also conducted training exercises after passing over the Bashi Channel and Miyako Strait. The H-6K bombers took off from an inland airport in north China, according to Shen.

The Chinese air force started regular high seas training in 2015.