Beat: News

Deadly Hong Kong Fire

Kills 128 , Hundreds Still Missing

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Brian Teepell/USPA 24 News - A massive fire engulfed several high-rise buildings at the Wang Fuk Court estate in Tai Po on Wednesday, killing at least 128 people including one firefighter, and hundreds of residents still missing, officials confirmed Thursday. Authorities caution that these numbers will rise.

Dense smoke and flames burst forth from bamboo scaffolding enveloping buildings under maintenance. Witnesses reported loud cracks as burning scaffolding crumbled, sending debris across nearly 2,000 units in the adjacent buildings.

Three men have been arrested for suspected manslaughter.(A late update indicates 8 more men have been detained under the same suspicion.) Rescue teams continue to reach residents trapped on upper floors, while 29 people remain hospitalized, and seven in critical condition.

Authorities evacuated adjacent buildings, closed segments of a major highway, and established temporary shelters and casualty hotlines. Chinese President Xi Jinping offered condolences and urged concerted efforts to mitigate further casualties.

The origin of the fire is under investigation, as firefighters work to extinguish remaining hotspots. Residents and officials are advocating for enhanced safety enforcement amid a surge in scaffolding-related fires.

As search efforts continue and the city pays its respects, investigators are poised to release a more detailed account of the fire's cause in the near future. Officials advise that the final report may unveil a combination of structural flaws, antiquated safety materials, and a single ignition source coalescing in a tragic and deadly sequence.

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