

China factory fire deaths rise to 37

by UPI

PUTIAN, China -- Fire officials in the southeastern Chinese city of Putian said Monday the death toll from a shoe factory fire had risen to 37. The fire broke out Sunday night in the six-story building where 56 workers were making leather shoe parts, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported. Initially, 34 deaths were reported, but that was increased to 37. The remaining 19 workers all were injured and were being treated in two hospitals, state officials said at a news briefing. Zhu Qing, director of the information office of the Fujian provincial government, said the factory owner and his wife who is the manager had been warned twice -- in May and September -- to improve safety standards at the factory but that hadn't apparently been done, the report said. The couple was in police custody for questioning Monday, Zhu said. It took firefighters an hour to get the fire under control and they also were able to prevent it from spreading to other buildings, Xinhua said.

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