

# 7 missing and feared dead after massive explosions at California fireworks warehouse

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Seven workers are missing after a fire triggered a series of massive explosions at a fireworks warehouse Tuesday evening in the northern California town of Esparto, in a largely rural area about 30 miles northwest of Sacramento. For days, firefighters and emergency workers have had to delay efforts to search for the missing because of ongoing fires and unexploded fireworks.

On Friday, after initial search efforts began, the Yolo County coroner confirmed the presence of human remains at the site. County officials said no positive identifications have been made and recovery efforts were expected to continue through the weekend.

The initial fire injured two workers who were treated and released from the hospital. The blaze ignited a huge supply of fireworks being prepared for Fourth of July celebrations across northern California, leading to multiple explosions, which destroyed warehouse buildings, at least two homes and several vehicles. Authorities say spreading fires burned at least 80 acres surrounding the facility.

In a Wednesday afternoon press conference, Esparto Fire Protection District Chief Curtis Lawrence said the warehouse had been reduced to a large debris field with “large pieces of shrapnel.” The chief added, “This is a very complex and risky scenario right now... I have not experienced something like this.”

While authorities did not release the identities of the missing workers, Syanna Ruiz, 18, identified one of them as her 18-year-old boyfriend Jesus Maneces Ramos. She told KCRA Sacramento News that it was his first day working at the facility.

Ramos and his two brothers, Johnny Ramos and Junior Melendez, were “stuck in the warehouse, possibly dead,” she said, as she demanded officials focus on their rescue during Wednesday’s press conference.

“We have a baby on the way,” she said, telling another local station, KXTV, that Jesus was “excited” about the “new chapter” in their lives.

“They were all three incredible men who had so much coming for them,” Ruiz said. “And I’m just praying to God

someway, somehow, that they’re OK.”

“The people who evacuated, they are OK,” Ruiz said. “The people in there are possibly dead, have no life and their families have yet to get any information... Maybe they’re stranded without [being] able to communicate.”

A father of three sons from the San Francisco Bay Area who work at the facility told KCRA he was also waiting for answers. Two of the three young men started their first day on the job on Tuesday, he told reporters.

“We all saw that on the news—how were they not at least saying, ‘Hey, the chances are very slim?’” Darlene Sanchez, a friend of one of the missing individuals, told KCRA reporters.

Sanchez’s best friend’s husband, Carlos Javier Rodriguez, 41, is among those presumed lost, Sanchez said. “He’s a devoted father, a hardworking man, a husband, dad, uncle, and best friend.”

She told KCRA that the family has come to terms with the grim reality and would be meeting with the coroner’s office Thursday. “There’s nothing left, and it’s been more than 24 hours. He would have found a way to let us know if he were alive,” Sanchez said. She added, “There’s six other families grieving and wanting answers.”

Officials have told families that unexploded fireworks made the area hazardous and it would take more time for the fire to cool and explosive experts to enter the site carefully and secure the area. Crews are reportedly using drones to assess remaining hazards. A one-mile evacuation zone remained in effect Wednesday.

The city of Marysville, Yuba City, Sutter County and Yuba County issued a joint statement saying the warehouse was operated by Devastating Pyrotechnics.

On Wednesday evening, the company’s web page posted the following statement.

Our hearts and thoughts are with those we lost, their families, and everyone impacted in our community. We are grateful for the swift response of

law enforcement and emergency personnel. Our focus will remain on those directly impacted by this tragedy, and we will cooperate fully with the proper authorities in their investigation.

The state firefighting agency Cal Fire said the company was “an active pyrotechnic license holder,” but investigators would work to determine whether all of its operations were in line with license requirements. “This type of incident is very rare,” Cal Fire said in its statement.

In fact, such tragedies have repeatedly occurred in the US and internationally in recent years.

In December 2022, four employees were killed and one other hospitalized for months with near-fatal injuries after an explosion at an Orlando, Florida fireworks warehouse. The workers employed by Magic in the Sky Florida LLC, ranging in age from 22 to 27 years old, were trapped when ignition sparked a fire and explosions in the storage facility.

Following its investigation, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) found the company failed to protect its employees by following established safety protocols and issued citations for 10 serious violation. This included failure to ensure proper storage of explosive materials, failure to comply with OSHA standard for preventing or minimizing the unplanned ignition of explosive materials, and failing to ensure electrical equipment in the work area was designed and classified for use in hazardous locations and could not serve as an ignition source.

OSHA initially fined the company \$109,375. After Magic in the Sky Florida LLC contested the fines, the number of citations was lowered from ten to seven and the penalty reduced to \$79,000 for the four workers’ lives.

Similar disasters have occurred internationally. Last month, an explosion at a fireworks factory in central China killed nine workers and injured 26 others. The June 16 explosion at the Shanzhou Fireworks factory occurred in a mountainous part of Linli county, and the risk of further explosions and lack of water complicated firefighting and the search for victims. Firefighters used remote-controlled water cannon and brought in 28 water tankers to put out the blaze.

In March 2023, seven workers were killed and 15 injured in a powerful blast at an illegal fireworks workshop near Mexico City. Explosions at such facilities are common, costing the lives of dozens of workers in recent years, according to the AP. In 2018, 24 people were killed in an explosion of fireworks in the town of Tultepec, just north of Mexico City, in the worst such blast in recent memory.

Other fireworks disasters have occurred in Thailand (23

killed in 2024 and 12 killed in 2023), India (20 killed in 2021) and the Netherlands (23 killed in 2000).

The deadly toll will only increase as the Trump administration guts whatever remains of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Chemical Safety Board (CSB) and other federal agencies.

The administration is removing all restrictions on the capitalist exploitation of the working class. This will guarantee an increase in the number of families mourning loved ones murdered and maimed in America’s industrial slaughterhouse.

In the face of this, the Democrats and trade union bureaucracies are functioning as Trump’s enforcers, with unions like the Teamsters, the United Auto Workers, the International Longshore Association and others aligning themselves with the fascist president.

This makes even more urgent the independent investigation initiated by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) into the death of Stellantis worker Ronald Adams Sr. The 63-year-old skilled trades worker was crushed to death on April 7 when an overhead crane that moves engines suddenly engaged and pinned him to a conveyor.

In the nearly three months since the fatal accident, Adams’ family and co-workers have not been given any substantial explanation by the company, the United Auto Workers or the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA) about why the father and grandfather was killed. On Thursday, MIOSHA officials told the *World Socialist Web Site* that the investigation “remains open.”

The IWA-RFC’s investigation, led by rank-and-file workers, is seeking to uncover the truth, hold those responsible for Adams’ preventable death to account, and give workers the information needed to expand rank-and-file control over safety in every factory and workplace.



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