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Rio’s engineering council received multiple warnings and a prior fire alert before deadly Shopping Tijuca blaze

Por Internet

The Regional Council of Engineering and Agronomy of Rio de Janeiro (CREA-RJ) had received a series of critical alerts regarding expansion works at Shopping Tijuca, located in the city’s North Zone, preceding a devastating fire that occurred in the shopping center’s basement. These warnings included four formal complaints about ongoing construction activities and a specific notification about a preliminary fire incident recorded in December 2024, just days before the main inferno erupted. The subsequent blaze resulted in the tragic deaths of two employees and left three other individuals injured, highlighting severe safety concerns.

According to the council, these denunciations triggered immediate inspection actions and prompted the dispatch of an official letter to the shopping mall’s administration. This correspondence explicitly requested detailed information concerning the work safety engineering measures in place, particularly those related to Brazilian standards for evacuation and fire prevention, underscoring the gravity of the potential risks.

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Regulatory body alerted to safety concerns

CREA-RJ emphasized that critical fire and panic safety systems, such as fire doors, extinguishers, sprinklers, and alarm mechanisms, are legally mandated to be linked to an Anotação de Responsabilidade Técnica (ART). This technical responsibility note must be issued by duly qualified engineers, ensuring professional oversight and accountability for the installation and maintenance of these crucial protective systems.

The council’s proactive engagement followed reports that pointed to serious deficiencies, bringing to light the importance of rigorous adherence to engineering protocols in public spaces. The notifications received underscored a pattern of potential non-compliance that required urgent attention from both the regulatory body and the mall’s management.

Escalating issues identified internally

Parallel to CREA-RJ’s actions, internal documents and emails obtained during the ongoing police investigation reveal that significant irregularities were noted at the Bell’Art store, situated in the subsoil, a mere six days before the fire allegedly originated there. These observations were meticulously documented by members of the shopping mall’s own security team, providing a grim premonition of the events to come.

Among the critical issues described in these internal reports were several glaring safety breaches, indicating a systemic failure in maintaining a secure environment. The documented problems included:

* The unauthorized use of the retail space for storing pillows, creating an easily combustible environment.
* Electrical wiring haphazardly secured with electrical tape onto MDF structures, posing a severe fire hazard.
* A smoke detector found to be dismantled, rendering a crucial early warning system inoperable.
* The widespread use of electrical extensions with multiple outlets, overloading circuits and increasing fire risk.

Fatal oversight in safety compliance

Further expanding on the internal findings, the safety report also detailed the presence of highly combustible materials within technical areas, specifically near dikes and suction pumps, which are vital infrastructure points. Additionally, machine rooms, spaces designed for equipment and not storage, were found to be used as repositories for various items, compromising operational safety.

The issues extended beyond the immediate vicinity of the presumed fire origin, with records also indicating inoperable smoke detectors on the upper floor and emergency luminaires that lacked proper fixation. These widespread deficiencies suggest a broader failure in the mall’s overall fire safety infrastructure and its maintenance protocols. The cumulative effect of such oversights created a high-risk environment, a situation tragically exposed by the subsequent blaze.

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Shopping management responds to allegations

The victims identified in the tragedy were Anderson Aguiar do Prado, a security supervisor at the mall, and Emellyn Silva, a brigade member. Both individuals were reportedly involved in the internal documentation process that highlighted the hazardous conditions at the site. Their participation in reporting the issues adds a poignant layer to the incident, suggesting their awareness of the dangers.

In a formal statement, Shopping Tijuca affirmed its full cooperation with authorities, indicating its readiness to provide all necessary documentation and information for a thorough investigation into the fire's causes. The mall management also stated that the internal report detailing the Bell'Art store's irregularities was compiled on December 27, when the store was first notified of the required adjustments. A second notification was dispatched to the owners two days later, underscoring attempts at internal resolution.

Unresolved hazards and their tragic consequences

According to the shopping mall's administration, the identified corrections were primarily operational in nature, suggesting that they could have been implemented directly by the retailer. The management claimed there was insufficient time to verify the adequacies of these corrections following the notifications or to apply any potential fines before the fire broke out. They also asserted that they lacked the legal authority to interdict commercial operations, framing the responsibility for immediate fixes on the tenant.

This stance highlights a complex interplay of responsibilities between mall administration and individual tenants regarding safety compliance. The rapid escalation from identified hazards to a catastrophic event within a short timeframe underscores the critical need for robust enforcement mechanisms and swift corrective actions when safety deficiencies are detected. The fire's progression from a specific location to a wider incident points to a failure in containment and a potential lack of readiness, despite previous warnings.

Ongoing investigations in Rio de Janeiro

The devastating fire, which erupted on the afternoon of January 2, is believed to have originated from an air-conditioning unit installed within a decoration store located in the subsoil. Authorities are continuing their thorough investigation to ascertain the definitive causes and all contributing factors to the tragic incident, aiming to prevent similar occurrences in the future and hold responsible parties accountable.

https://www.mixvale.com.br/2026/01/08/rios-engineering-council-received-multiple-warnings-and-a-prior-fire-alert-before-deadly-shopping-tijuca-blaze/

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