

# *Factory Blaze Toll in Manila Rises to 72*

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Manila, May 14 (RHC)-- At least 72 people have been killed by a fire that gutted a factory in a suburb of the Philippines capital city of Manila, officials say. According to reports, the blaze broke out as sparks from welding work set fire to flammable chemicals near the slipper factory, local officials said on Wednesday.

The death toll is expected to rise, as a number of other people are still not accounted for and so far firefighters battling the blaze have not found any survivors. It is believed that most of the victims were asphyxiated by the thick smoke caused by burning chemicals and rubber.

Only a few people were able to escape the blaze as it spread quickly after starting, trapping people on the second floor of the building. "It happened so fast that few people were able to escape," said a security guard, adding workers downstairs were forced by the flames and smoke to flee upstairs where they were trapped.

Some of the trapped victims had sent a text to family members for help before death, local media reported. The blaze took over five hours to contain and corpse recovery has been hampered due to the unsafe conditions of the building.



**Radio Habana Cuba**