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## Deadly Hong Kong Blaze Claims 13 Lives, Rescue Ongoing



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A massive fire tore through several high-rise apartment towers in Hong Kong's Tai Po district on Wednesday, killing at least 13 people, including a firefighter, and injuring 15 others. Hundreds of residents were trapped as flames and thick smoke spread across the complex, prompting an urgent rescue operation.

The blaze began around 2:50 p.m. local time in the Wang Fuk Court complex, home to approximately 2,000 apartments built in the early 1980s. Bamboo scaffolding used for ongoing renovations contributed to the rapid spread of the fire. Authorities raised the city's highest fire alarm for the first time in nearly two decades.

Firefighters, numbering 760 personnel, battled extreme heat and falling debris while trying to reach units where residents were trapped. Deputy Fire Services Director Derek Armstrong Chan described challenges from the scaffolding and high flames, which exceeded the reach of fire truck ladders.

Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee activated the city's Emergency Accident Monitoring and Support Center. Temporary shelters were opened at nearby community centers and schools to assist older residents and others evacuated from the towers.

Authorities are investigating the cause of the fire, while local officials urged caution regarding bamboo scaffolding, which is widely used for building renovations. Previous incidents have prompted plans to gradually replace bamboo with steel structures to reduce fire risks.

The incident is the deadliest Hong Kong fire in nearly 17 years, evoking memories of previous high-rise fires and highlighting ongoing challenges in ensuring urban fire safety.