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19 dead, 60 hurt as HK bus overturns

HONG KONG (AFP) — The driver of a double-decker bus that overturned in Hong Kong, killing at least 19 people and injuring 60 was arrested on Saturday evening for dangerous driving, police said.

Images from the scene showed rescuers trying to reach passengers trapped inside the bus, which lay on its side with part of its roof torn off near the town of Tai Po in the northern New Territories.

It appeared to have slid on its side and hit a lamppost which smashed into the upper decks of the vehicle. The driver has been arrested on charges of causing death and grievous bodily harm by dangerous driving.

In an updated toll in the early hours of yesterday, the city's Hospital Authority said another victim had died, bringing the total to 19 fatalities.

But ten of the injured were in critical condition, while another 20 were seriously wounded, officials said.

Most of the dead and injured were on the upper deck of the bus, Chan Hing-yu of the fire department told reporters.

The driver was suspected of being over the speed limit as he went down a slope and lost control of the vehicle, senior traffic superintendent Lee Chi-wai told reporters.

He was not in need of any medical treatment after the crash and was sober, he added.

Speaking to local media, passengers said the bus was going too fast before the crash.

"It was much faster than I normally felt in a bus," one injured passenger told the *South China Morning Post*'s online edition.

"And then it was like the tire slipped, and the bus turned. It was really chaotic in the bus. People fell on one another and got tossed from side to side," he said.

Before the crash, passengers had complained to the driver who was reportedly 10 minutes late and he then started speeding up, the *Apple Daily* reported, quoting injured passengers at the scene.

One injured passenger told the *Oriental Daily* said it was like the driver was "intentionally using the bus to throw a tantrum."

Lawmaker Lam Cheuk-ting of the Democratic Party urged the government to rethink the design of double-decker buses saying the upper decks had been "repeatedly torn off in accidents, posing a serious threat to passengers on the upper level."

He also called on the government to address the issue of many drivers working overly long hours.



Firemen try to remove injured passengers from a double-decker lying on its side in Hong Kong on Saturday. AP

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