

Toxic alcohol kills 17 in southern India

January 2 2012

At least 17 people have died from drinking toxic home-brewed alcohol in southern India, an official said on Monday, just weeks after a similar incident claimed 170 lives.

Fifteen people died in tribal villages of Andhra Pradesh state over the New Year weekend and two more died on Monday, an official from the excise ministry in the state capital Hyderabad told AFP.

"All of the victims were basically labourers. Three women are also among the dead," he said, declining to be named.

The latest deaths came less than a month after 170 people died from consuming similar poisonous [alcoholic drinks](#) in the eastern state of West Bengal.

Poor workers who are unable to afford branded alcohol often turn to illegally brewed liquor for cheap intoxication.

Two Andhra Pradesh officials responsible for regulating alcohol have been suspended following the weekend deaths and liquor samples have been sent for chemical analysis.

The liquor may have been contaminated with methanol, a highly toxic alcohol sometimes used as an anti-freeze or fuel but also added to home-brewed liquor to increase [alcoholic content](#).

If ingested, it can cause blindness and [liver damage](#) and it kills in larger

concentrations.

A 2004 [World Health Organization](#) report concluded [alcohol abuse](#) was one of the main killers of young Indian men, while an Indian government-funded study the same year found 62.5 million people were unhealthily dependent on alcohol.

Other recent mass poisonings caused by home-brewed alcohol include one in 2009 when 43 died in the western state of Gujarat, which bans the sale of alcohol.

In May 2008, more than 168 people died in the southern states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

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