

Two Covid scares cause mayhem in Shanghai

August 16 2022

Just two possible Covid-19 cases have sparked chaotic scenes in Shanghai, with crowds of people seen running out of a building and an Ikea store to try and escape a lockdown under China's strict coronavirus rules.

The country's zero-Covid strategy involves snap lockdowns and quarantines, sometimes over just a handful of cases, and the measures have sparked anxiety and anger in some cities.

Videos widely shared on social media and verified by AFP showed a small group of PPE-clad personnel trying to keep the main doors of a Shanghai building closed on Friday after a worker there was identified as a close contact of a Covid case.

A large crowd is then seen bursting past the outnumbered staff, running away from the building as onlookers film the scene on their mobile phones.

Some people were seen dragging what appeared to be a metal barricade several metres as they fled the mall.

Close contacts could face days of quarantine and monitoring under China's health rules.

Similar scenes unfolded at an Ikea store in Shanghai's Xuhui district on Saturday, when health authorities tried to lock down customers on site over an "abnormal" test result.

Video clips shared online showed a large group of people trying to leave.

In one [scene](#), screams are heard as personnel try to keep doors closed. The crowd eventually pushes its way through the door and people are seen running past to try and get out.

The 25 million residents of Shanghai—China's biggest city—have grappled with harsh Covid rules since earlier this year, when it was sealed off for two months to contain an outbreak.

The measures battered [business activity](#) and some residents reported trouble accessing food and non-Covid [medical care](#).

They also sparked protests by frustrated residents against the authorities.

Anger spilled over in the southern island of Hainan too, where more than 80,000 tourists were stranded in the resort city of Sanya earlier this month because of a Covid flare-up.

Travellers there have been protesting, with [social media](#) posts last weekend showing crowds on the street shouting for local leaders to meet with them.

China is the only major economy still holding fast to a zero-Covid strategy, stunting local tourism during peak travel seasons.

The country's borders have been largely closed since early 2020, halting international tourism.

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Citation: Two Covid scares cause mayhem in Shanghai (2022, August 16) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-08-covid-mayhem-shanghai.html>

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