

# Chemical Leak Sends 119 To Hospital

NEW BEDFORD, Massachusetts — Noxious fumes at a trash disposal facility sent 119 people to hospitals on Monday, including two who were listed in critical condition.

Firefighters responded to ABC Disposal Service Inc. in New Bedford in the morning after a report that something brought to the facility was making people sick, fire Chief Paul Leger said.

As many as 10 people lost consciousness after breathing in the fumes, authorities said. The victims were decontaminated by a hazardous materials team on site before being taken to different area hospitals.

The victims were employees of the company and first responders, including police, firefighters and paramedics, the hospital said. Their symptoms included nausea, respiratory distress and dizziness.

Charlton Memorial Hospital in Fall River received 53 patients, but one person remained hospitalized late Monday.

The fumes were caused by trash that was brought in and was being manually sorted, said Ed Coletta, a spokesman for the state Department of Environmental Protection. Authorities said the chemicals were contained at the facility.

Investigators are still trying to determine what type of chemical was leaked and its source, Leger said.

ABC Disposal is a 40-year-old business that collects, transports and disposes of more than 200,000 tons of nonhazardous waste per year, according to the company's Web site. The company disposes residential, commercial and industrial waste.

The facility is located in an industrial area of the coastal city about 55 miles (88 kilometres) south of Boston, and city residents were not considered to be in danger, Leger said.

Ted Fitzgerald, a spokesman for the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration, said the agency had sent a safety inspector and an industrial hygienist to the site to investigate.

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