Fire At Mich. Facility May Have Started Near Meter

DAVID EGGERT Associated Press Writer - August 5, 2009

VIENNA TOWNSHIP, Mich. (AP) — A fire at a Michigan fuel storage facility that caused several oil barrels to explode and prompted area evacuations may have started near an electric meter, authorities said Wednesday.

Clio Assistant Fire Chief Kerry Paulson said the fire was "mostly out" at the White Oil Co. facility about 65 miles north of Detroit. He said a crew of six to eight firefighters and a truck shooting flame-retardant foam overnight battled the blaze that had engulfed two buildings.

"They have done an awesome job," Paulson said. "They didn't want to leave. They wanted to fight this fire all night until it was out."

Tuesday afternoon, an employee reported a small fire at an electrical meter outside one of the buildings, Paulson said. That person was among a handful of people at the plant when the fire broke out and shot heavy plumes of black smoke into the air.

Fifty-gallon oil drums and industrial solvents were inside the buildings at the time and some of them exploded, shooting the barrels 50 feet in the air, authorities said. One of the flaming barrels ignited an adjacent building and officials planned to raze both buildings Wednesday.

He said at least 25 fire departments and more than 100 firefighters battled the blaze. Two of those firefighters received minor injuries and the fire remains under investigation.

"Everything seems to have died down," Paulson said. "The fire is mostly out."

An evacuation order remained in effect Wednesday within a two-mile radius as officials monitored air quality. Emergency officials contacted about 4,000 residential and business telephone numbers to notify them of the evacuation, said Genesee County Emergency Management Director Tammy Yorks.

It was not clear how many people left their homes, but about 150 displaced residents were staying at a Red Cross shelter inside Trinity Assembly of God in Mt. Morris Township early Wednesday.

Kay Haddon, the senior pastor's administrative assistant at the church, said most of the people who stayed the night Tuesday remained hopeful that they could return

home later Wednesday.

"They're anxious to get home," Haddon said. "It was a long night for them."

Source URL (retrieved on *04/21/2015 - 1:32am*):
http://www.chem.info/news/2009/08/fire-mich-facility-may-have-started-near-meter