

Faulty Valve Blamed For Propane Blaze

NORFOLK, Neb. (AP) - Investigators are blaming a faulty valve for a propane-fueled blaze at a closed Nebraska manufacturing plant that forced thousands of evacuations.

The Norfolk fire department said Friday that a regulating valve near a 30,000-gallon propane tank allowed gas to vent in the air. The gas was ignited by a pilot light near the tank and threatened the tank itself.

The Thursday fire forced evacuations of about 8,000 people before it was safely extinguished. There were no reports of injuries.

The Protient plant manufactured and marketed dairy-based ingredients for dairy products. It closed in October 2008, but an Illinois company was leasing the plant.

Norfolk is a city of about 23,000 about 90 miles northwest of Omaha.

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