Coal Plant Explosion Under Investigation

EUHARLEE, Ga. (AP) — No one was seriously hurt in an explosion Thursday afternoon at a coal-fired power plant roughly 50 miles northwest of Atlanta, utility officials said.

The explosion happened at Unit 2 of Plant Bowen while it was offline for maintenance work, said Chuck Eaton, chairman of the Georgia Public Service Commission, which regulates power utilities. Eaton said he was briefed by Georgia Power officials.

"Other than some minor bumps and bruises, everyone is safe and sound," Eaton said. "We're very happy about that." Officials Thursday night said three people were treated for minor injuries on the scene and a fourth had been treated and released from a local hospital.

The cause of the explosion was not immediately clear. Preliminary information gathered by the utility showed there was a malfunction or mechanical failure that resulted in an explosion of a plant generator, Georgia Power spokesman Mark Williams said. He said there were several minor injuries.

"We've got to investigate and see what's going on," Williams said. "There's no threat to the public."

The plant's four units were offline Thursday night while the explosion was under investigation, and the incident was not expected to impact service, said Jacob Hawkins, a Georgia Power spokesman.

Connie Morrison lives across the road from the plant and told the Rome News-Tribune the explosion sounded like a low-flying airplane.

"We looked out and saw smoke coming from Plant Bowen. I called 911 and then we went downstairs and it sounded like we heard the same thing all over again. We grabbed up all of our belongings together and left the house," she said.

Georgia Power is a subsidiary of the Atlanta-based Southern Co.

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