Units from Tasley, Onancock, Melfa, Wachapreague, Parksley, Bloxom and the Hazmat Unit responded to an exterior chemical fire at the Perdue Processing Plant in Accomac at approximately 2:45 Wednesday afternoon.

Upon arrival firemen discovered what appeared to be a storage tank on fire on the northern end of the complex. According to authorities, a peracetic acid and chloride tank located near a fuel tank caught fire. Paracetic acid is a component of antimicrobial washes for poultry carcasses and fruit. Emergency responders on the scene decided to let the fire burn down because adding water would cause an explosion.

A precautionary evacuation of the area was ordered at approximately 3:45 p.m. The Virginia Beach Fire Department sent a command center vehicle to assist.

Emergency personnel and air monitoring of the situation continued into Wednesday evening.

The Accomack County Department of Public Safety issued a Red Alert asking residents in the Pastoria area to shelter in place until 7:30 last night.

Traffic was backed up and allowed to progress slowly past the plant from 3:45 until approximately 5:00 p.m.