



Investigation Begins into Explosion, Fire at Chemical Plant

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Story Created: Oct 30, 2007

Story Updated: Oct 30, 2007

Tuesday night we're getting a better look at the damage and pollution from Monday's huge chemical fire in Des Moines.

Barton Solvents, Inc. workers were handling a chemical when, for some unknown reason, it caught fire.

More than 100 chemicals burned Monday in the fire. After initial investigations, tests show the pollution wasn't very bad.

"As dramatic as it looked on TV and as significant as it really was, it really turns out to be very minimal impact on the environment as we can tell at this point," said A.J. Mumm with the Polk County Emergency Management Agency.

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Judging by the steel that melted, investigators say the fire was around 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit, which is hot enough to completely burn the chemicals, turning them to dust. To put that in perspective, Mumm said a typical house fire reaches temperatures of 900 to 1,000 degrees.

Still, investigators are checking the soil, water and air.

The fire affected other businesses as well. Next door is a company that rents out portable storage units. The lot manager there says the contents of one of the units is completely destroyed. He said the unit caught fire and firefighters sprayed water on it. Inside was the personal items belonging to an unknown woman.

The clean up continues, and emergency management is praising Barton Solvents for their preparedness for an event like this.

That lesson was re-enforced after another Barton plant exploded earlier this year in Kansas. Investigators say that fire started from a **static electricity** shock.

Barton's president says they are committed to their workers.

"You can't get employees back if something happens to them and the employee is the single most important asset any company has, and we take care of them," said David Casten.

The employees that work at the plant are still getting a paycheck through this. One of the warehouses on site is still in operation. Casten said it could be months before everything is back to normal.