



UPDATE: Malfunctioning gauge led to tank explosion

Posted: Dec 17, 2014 3:59 PM CST

Updated: Dec 18, 2014 3:08 PM CST

By Kevin Millard **CONNECT**

La Crosse, WI (WXOW) - A malfunctioning gauge led to the explosion of a large storage tank last month at a northside business in November.

The La Crosse Fire Department and the head of the company that owns Midwest Industrial Asphalt released information Thursday on the cause of the blast.

Steve Mathy, president of ALM Holding Co., which acts as the parent company to Midwest Industrial Asphalt said the worker was following protocol when the explosion happened. "The operator checked the gauge inside the tank, which indicated there was two feet, two inches of product," he said. "He then proceeded to draw a sample, since the gauge indicated the sample port was submerged in the liquid."

When the worker attempted to draw a sample, nothing came out of the port. Mathy said the worker then lit a torch to unclog the port, which is proper protocol. Instead, the gauge was faulty and not submerged within the mix of asphalt and diesel fuel. Mathy said the torch ignited vapors which traveled through the port and into the tank where the explosion occurred.

Midwest Industrial Asphalt said it has torn down the destroyed 132,000 gallon tank and plans to rebuild.

Mathy also said the company is looking into newer and more advanced gauges as well as alternative heating sources, such as steam, for any potential clogs in the sample port.

La Crosse Fire Department Division Chief Craig Snyder said the training firefighters go through kept the situation from becoming much worse. Crews were able to quickly contain the fire following the explosion from spreading to other tanks.

The La Crosse Fire Department plans to release the results of their investigation into the cause and origin of an explosion that destroyed a large industrial storage tank in November.

The 132,000 gallon tank, which contained around 7,000 gallons of a mix of asphalt and diesel fuel, exploded shortly before 7:00 a.m. on November 19 at Midwest Industrial Asphalt at 634 Sumner Street.

One person, a worker at the plant, suffered minor injuries in the blast.

Division Chief Craig Snyder and Steve Mathy, president of ALM Holding Company, will discuss the details of what happened in the explosion, which was heard all across the city. Firefighters were able to contain the resulting fire to the one tank.

WXOW will bring you the details as they become available.



All content © Copyright 2000 - 2014 WorldNow and WXOW. All Rights Reserved.
For more information on this site, please read our [Privacy Policy](#), [Terms of Service](#) and [Mobile Privacy Policy & Terms of Service](#).

Persons with disabilities who need assistance with issues relating to the content of this station's public inspection file should contact Administrative Assistant Theresa Wopat at 507-895-9969. Questions or concerns relating to the accessibility of the FCC's online public file system should be directed to the FCC at 888-225-5322, at 888-835-5322 (TTY) or at fccinfo@fcc.gov.