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Tuesday, February 20, 2007

Plant closed after fire

Updated: 2/19/2007 10:02 PM
By: Stephanie Stilwell



WINSTON-SALEM -- A Winston-Salem packaging plant is closed after an explosion and fire ripped apart the side of the building. It happened at Oracle Flexible Packaging, just south of Winston-Salem State University.

"We just heard a big explosion and, of course, the first thing you think of when you're in charge of a plant

is it's something in your plant so we went running out looking for the guys in our plant, seeing what was going on," said Salem Steel President Jim Brewer.

Everything was fine at his plant but it was a different story next door at Oracle Flexible Packaging.

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All of the people in and around the plant were able to make it out OK, aside from a few cuts and bruises. All those workers were available to help firefighters when they first arrived on the scene.

"The employees said that they were some small explosions or sounds that sounded like explosions and certainly from that point there was a larger bang or explosion and at that point the fire erupted," said District Fire Chief Anthony Farmer.

Investigators are looking into reports that the fire started in machinery in that part of the plant and caused a gas leak but officials say they are still determining exactly what happened.



"Or if there was some smaller explosions that caused a gas leak that we do not know yet and that really apart of the investigation and we'd rather find out the real details of what happened rather than

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speculating," Farmer added.

While the cause of the fire remains under investigation officials say the plant, at least for the time being, will be closed.

Fire officials estimate several hundred thousand dollars in damage to the packaging plant.

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