



FIRE DEPARTMENT PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ATHENS FIRE DEPARTMENT RESPONDS TO ADLER PELZER ATHENS FIRE

ATHENS, TENNESSEE – July 21, 2023 – The Athens Fire Department was dispatched to a fire alarm on July 21, 2023, at approximately 5:13 p.m. at Adler Pelzer Athens located at 115 Industrial Way. An employee called 911 stating they had a fire in the blend room and the employees were evacuating the building.

The Athens Fire Department arrived on the scene and Battalion 3 immediately established command.

The first arriving units reported light smoke visible from the exterior of the building. After investigation, a fire was located inside the plant. There was no visibility in the production area and all access points to the plant had black smoke about 2-3 feet from the floor of the plant. Off duty fire personnel were requested and with county fire units to be on standby.

Crews quickly deployed handlines for fire attack. Entry team was met with heavy smoke conditions in the plant area and the sprinkler system inside the plant was active. The fire was located near the center point of the plant.

Plant staff alerted command that possibly one person was missing, and two personnel presented with smoke inhalation. The missing person was located outside the building, and all employees were accounted for. AMR EMS was on scene for anyone needing triage or treatment. EMS advised command that both employees denied transport.

Chief Ainsworth was notified of the need for out-of-town resources due to the amount of active fire and the location of the fire within the 237,781 square foot industrial building. Tri-State Mutual Aid Resources were activated. The following agencies responded: Athens Rural Fire, Englewood, Cleveland, Bradley County, Riceville, Decatur, Chattanooga, Tri-Comm, Meigs County, McMinn County, Hazmat Air Supply and Command Post, and McMinn County Hwy. Dept. Fuel Truck.

Etowah City, Madisonville, and Polk County provided coverage to Athens City and Englewood fire departments while crews were busy with the fire.

Approximately 70 total personnel were on scene.



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Crews battled the fire for several hours. With smoke conditions improving, interior crews advised the fire was under control with some remaining hotspots. The preliminary cause of the fire was determined to be a processing machine that caught fire in the blend room during normal operation and product buildup throughout the plant aided in the spread of the fire.

Due to the processing equipment and type of materials used, several confined spaces were not accessible to fire personnel. Plant management was directed to have their employees monitor the conditions of smoldering products.

Chief Ainsworth stated, "Quick response by firefighters, Tri-State Mutual Aid, Alder Pelzer's staff, and the sprinkler system, prevented the incident from becoming much worse. No injuries were reported. We would like to thank all responding Fire Departments for their help and for being on standby, for the city, while our crews were occupied with the fire."

For more information, please contact Fire Chief Brandon Ainsworth at 423-744-2789 or bainsworth@athenstn.gov.