



Friday, April 17, 2009

Investigators look for cause of blast at aluminum plant

Mike Martindale / The Detroit News

New Hudson --While the investigation continues into what caused a blast sending three workers to the hospital with injuries, the operators of Continental Aluminum said Friday at no time was there a gas leak as initially reported.

Continental Aluminum on Milford Road resumed operations Friday as it continues its investigation into an explosion that occurred last night inside the recycling plant. The Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA) is on the scene to conduct an independent investigation

"Continental Aluminum would like to personally thank the Oakland County Sheriff's Department, Lyon Township Fire Department and emergency response teams for the diligent care provided to our workers," said J. David Rinehart, President of Continental Aluminum. "We're fortunate to operate in a community with professional and well-trained first responders."

Lyon Township Fire Department and emergency crews, as well as the Oakland County Sheriff's Department, responded immediately to the incident around 10 p.m. Thursday. Three of five workers inside the plant suffered injuries: two were treated and released for smoke inhalation and a third, who has minor burns, was hospitalized overnight for observation. All three are expected to return to work next week, a company statement said.

According to a statement released Friday, the explosion occurred inside the charge well of one of the furnaces inside the plant. A charge well is the area where the scrap material is introduced into the furnace.

Fire officials turned the gas line off at the plant as a precautionary measure and authorized Continental Aluminum to turn the line back on this morning. Milford Road was also closed as a precautionary measure and has since reopened.

The plant did not suffer any damage that would disrupt further operations, no hazardous materials were involved, and the local community was not at risk, according to the company's press release.

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