

# Acetylene Tank Explosion Rocks Mich. Town

David N. Goodman, Associated Press Writer

MARYSVILLE, Mich. (AP) — Multiple explosions rocked a Michigan welding supply plant after an acetylene tank burst into flames on Monday, sending an employee to the hospital and prompting many homes and businesses to evacuate, authorities said.

An employee at the plant in Marysville, about 50 miles northeast of Detroit, was removing a valve from the tank when it exploded, said the town's police chief, Tim Buelow. He said the worker was able to walk out of the building to a waiting ambulance, and his injuries were not life-threatening.

All other employees at South Park Welding Supplies LLC were accounted for and no other injuries were reported, the chief said.

Thick plumes of black smoke were visible for miles after the first explosion, which rattled windows in nearby downtown Port Huron. The initial blast was quickly followed by several secondary explosions, scattering shrapnel for hundreds of feet, including a large chunk that flew over a row of homes across the street.

Police barricaded several square miles, evacuating some people while warning others to stay indoors because of the potential for airborne chemicals that included propane and acetylene.

The fire, which caused the plant's roof to collapse, raged for about two hours before firefighters were able to bring it under control, Buelow said.

The U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives sent an investigator to the scene, and a St. Clair County hazardous materials team converged on the site.

Chris Perry, 50, a laid-off shipping clerk and culinary arts student whose rental flat is about four blocks from the plant, said the blast briefly knocked out power and shook the house so hard he thought it came from a construction crew working on the floor above him.

"I'm just sitting there watching the morning news, drinking my coffee. Then, a couple of booms," Perry said. "It sounded like it was right there."

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*Associated Press Writer David Aguilar in Detroit contributed to this report.*

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