

Suspect In ABB Shooting Unhappy At Work, Says Neighbors

Cheryl Wittenauer, Associated Press Writer

ST. LOUIS (AP) — The man widely identified as the gunman in a fatal shooting spree at a St. Louis industrial plant was described as an amicable family man and good neighbor, who would rake an elder's leaves and bring him holiday treats.

But 51-year-old Timothy Hendron of Webster Groves, a St. Louis suburb, was unhappy at work, according to those who knew him even casually, and embroiled in a pension dispute with his company that was being litigated this week in U.S. District Court in Kansas City.

Police said the gunman showed up at ABB Group's plant in north St. Louis around 6:30 a.m. Thursday and opened fire, killing three people and wounding five before apparently killing himself. Frightened co-workers scrambled into closets and to the snow-covered roof for safety.

He was found dead inside the plant from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound.

"We're very confident that this is the shooter," Police Chief Dan Isom said at a late-afternoon news conference Thursday.

Isom declined to name the shooter, pending positive identification from family. But fire officials confirmed earlier Thursday that Timothy Hendron was the name of the person police said they were seeking, and media widely identified him.

The motive for the shooting wasn't known, and Isom said it may be weeks before police pieced together why it happened. But in 2006, Hendron and other ABB workers sued the company over retirement losses. The federal lawsuit accused ABB and its pension-review committee of causing their 401(k) accounts to include investment options with "unreasonable and excessive" — and undisclosed — fees and expenses. The suit went to trial Tuesday.

The shooting began during a shift change at the plant, where the Swiss-owned company makes electrical transformers. Police spent hours inside the sprawling building searching for the gunman and additional victims.

Word of Hendron's alleged involvement in the shooting stunned his neighbors in the middle-class neighborhood, where police searched his modest, brick home Thursday. Neighbors said Hendron left behind a wife and teenage son.

"I couldn't ask for a better neighbor. We never had any problems with him," said Glenn Meyer, 71, noting that Hendron made friendly gestures.

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Yet, Hendron mentioned in passing that he was having problems at ABB, and over the last two years he asked his neighbor Mike Sweney, an attorney, for referral to a good labor lawyer.

Hendron hinted that he was being retaliated against for taking part in the litigation against ABB, Sweney said. He said Hendron didn't elaborate on problems at work but said employees were being treated unfairly and needed to take legal action to set things right.

"I sensed a certain disgruntlement on his part," Sweney said.

The plant employs about 270 people. Forty to 50 employees were likely in the building at the time, police Capt. Sam Dotson said.

Two of those killed were found in the parking lot outside the plant, Isom said. One victim and the man believed to be the shooter were found inside, along with three weapons — an assault rifle, a handgun and a shotgun, he said.

Names of the victims were not immediately released. Police said two of the injured were in critical condition and two were in fair condition. One was treated at a hospital and released.

It wasn't clear how many shots were fired, but authorities said employees scurried to find refuge from the bullets.

"Many of them sought safety on the roof, in boilers and broom closets," Dotson said.

The shooting occurred on what was already a chaotic day in St. Louis after 4 inches of snow fell, winds whipped to more than 30 mph and the wind chill dipped below zero.

Dozens of emergency vehicles circled the sprawling plant. Interstate 70 was closed for about three miles in both directions for several hours while police searched for the gunman in and around the plant.

ABB Group makes power transmission and industrial automation equipment. The company manufactures transformers at the St. Louis site. ABB has operations in roughly 100 countries, employing about 120,000 people. Last October, ABB reported third-quarter earnings of more than \$1 billion.

Thomas Schmidt, an ABB corporate spokesman in Zurich, Switzerland, said in statement that the company had received reports of the shooting.

"This is obviously a very serious situation and we are working to gather more information as it becomes available," the statement said. "The welfare of our employees is of utmost importance to us."

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Associated Press writers Jim Salter, Christopher Leonard and Jim Suhr in St. Louis contributed to this report.

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