

Explosion At Gun Manufacturer Caused By Single Machine

COLEBROOK, N.H. (AP) — The investigation into a series of explosions at a gun and ammunition manufacturing plant in far northern New Hampshire that killed two people has led to one machine, the state's fire marshal said Saturday.

Bill Degnan said that the investigation into Friday's explosions at the MDM Muzzleloader building has led to a machine in the manufacturing section of the plant. He said no cause has been determined.

About half of the plant was heavily damaged by the explosions that killed two men and hurt another, shook buildings for blocks away and forced the evacuation of dozens of homes, Degnan said.

The building, located in an industrial park in Colebrook, will be closed "for an extensive period of time," he said.

The explosions happened in an area where there was some manufacturing taking place, Degnan said. He said investigators were learning what materials were in use. They were told the plant makes gunpowder.

"We actually have some hazardous materials that we're dealing with," Degnan said, adding that crews worked Saturday to make the area safe for investigators.

State police, representatives of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration were also at the scene Saturday.

The New Hampshire Union Leader reported Sunday that the state Fire Marshal's Office identified one of the two workers killed in the explosion as Jesse Kennett, 49, of Stratford. The newspaper said the identity of the second worker was being withheld pending positive identification.

Min Kennett, town clerk in Northumberland and Jesse Kennett's sister-in-law, told the newspaper that he was proud of his family and loved the Great North Woods. She said he went to work at the plant several months ago after he lost his job at the Ethan Allen factory in Beecher Falls, Vt., when that plant shut down last summer.

The explosions Friday afternoon filled the sky with black smoke. Mia West, the town's public information officer, said firefighters were unable to get close enough because ammunition was still going off more than two hours later.

About 40 nearby homes were evacuated. All residents were allowed to return Friday

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night, Degnan said.

Colebrook is about 140 miles north of the capital city of Concord and 10 miles from the Canadian border.

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