Fire Engulfs AR Fake Fingernail Factory

MAUMELLE, Ark. (AP) — A factory that produces artificial fingernails and related products in central Arkansas caught fire Thursday morning, prompting employees to evacuate the plant and several nearby small businesses.

The Arkansas Department of Emergency Management said 40,000 gallons of acetone was burning at the Onyx Laboratories plant in Maumelle, just north of Little Rock.

North Little Rock Fire Chief Steve Smith said there were no early reports of injuries.

Several agencies responded to fight the fire. Firefighters were still at the scene at 11:30 a.m., 2 ½ hours after the blaze began. The building that contained the acetone appeared largely intact.

Smith said he didn't yet know the cause of the fire, but that the owner of Onyx told him workers suddenly noticed the blaze and that everyone escaped the building.

The blaze was contained in one small building, though the entire plant and other companies within a 300-yard radius on the quiet commercial estate were also evacuated, he said. Exposure to excessive levels of acetone can irritate the eyes and breathing passages.

No one at Onyx could be immediately reached for comment by phone or email.

Traffic was blocked for a couple of hours on busy Maumelle Boulevard, a four-lane state highway that serves as the main road to residential and commercial areas in Maumelle, a bedroom community of Little Rock. It reopened shortly after the fire was brought under control.

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