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Tuesday, November 9th.
By order of the Board of Directors

FINAL SALE

Concerns remain

No immediate explanation available for Livonia industrial explosion

BY HEATHER NEEDHAM
STAFF WRITER

No immediate explanation appears in sight for the explosion and fire at a Livonia industrial facility Friday that sent 40 people to the hospital and shut down I-96 for several hours.

Jim Corcoran, Livonia fire marshal, said fire inspectors and Michigan Department of Environmental Quality crews wrapped up the initial containment Saturday and also took photographs of the scene. The DEQ is continuing to do a water and soil analysis.

"The first rule is containment," Corcoran said. "We entered (McGean-Rohco) Saturday wearing fully encapsulated suits," he added, referring to protective hazardous materials "moon suits."

The fire department plans to interview McGean-Rohco employees and review records

'Most contamination had been remediated as of Saturday. There may still be contamination on the (McGean-Rohco) site or on the neighboring site.'

*Alan Brandemihl
—Livonia fire battalion chief*

during the next few weeks to find out what caused the explosion. Corcoran said he expected investigators would be able to re-enter the factory by today.

In Friday's incident, a flash fire in a stainless-steel blender occurred as a worker mixed dry chemicals for plating and coating aluminum just before 8 a.m.

The fire triggered sprinklers, sending a green puddle out of the building, on Schoolcraft Road west of Newburgh, along with an ominous green cloud of toxic fumes.

About 40 people were taken to the hospital, including a 44-year-old McGean-Rohco worker. The Westland man was treated for minor, first-degree chemical burns at St. Mary Hospital and later released.

Alan Brandemihl, Livonia Fire Department battalion chief, said though the biggest danger has passed, there are still concerns about the explosion's environmental impact.

"Most contamination had been remediated as of Saturday," Brandemihl said. "There may

still be contamination on the (McGean-Rohco) site or on the neighboring site."

McGean-Rohco employees are being paid during the down time, Brandemihl said.

"This is a very costly incident in terms of public relations, money and down time," Brandemihl said. "This is not a good thing for the city."

The chemicals damaged during the fire will most likely need to be dumped at a hazardous waste facility, compounding the costs significantly, Brandemihl said.

Maura Campbell, spokeswoman for the Department of Consumer and Industry Services, said safety officers are continuing to investigate the explosion scene at McGean-Rohco. She said the process could take several weeks.

Friday's incident was the third at McGean-Rohco in less than a decade, with the most recent reportedly about three years ago.

In 1992, after a fire, the state cited the company for two safety violations: failing to provide monthly emergency respirator inspections and the lack of an emergency response plan. McGean-Rohco paid a \$1,225 fine to the state.

During a 1993 inspection, 12 violations, including five serious ones, were discovered by the state. The serious violations involved machinery guarding, fire exits, grinders, standard barriers, portable ladders and container labeling.

All problems were quickly addressed, Campbell said.

In 1988, a plant inspection revealed one serious violation and 13 less serious violations.

Calls seeking comment Tuesday from McGean-Rohco plant manager Jim Rector were not returned by press time Wednesday.

Annual Irish Pallottine dance benefits missionary

Westland will be one of five cities hosting the dignitaries from the Pallottine Order of Priests when the Irish community has its annual Pallottine dance to benefit the missionary work of the order Saturday, Nov. 6, at the Hellenic Cultural Center on Joy Road, just west of Wayne Road in Westland.

HELLENIC CULTURAL CENTER

The guests will receive a local welcome from the City of Westland with greetings from Mayor Robert Thomas and a special flag welcome from the Westland Fire Department.

Visiting Westland, Milwaukee, St. Louis, Reno and Dallas will be the Rev. Seamus Freeman, rector general on the International Pallottine Order, from Rome, Italy; the Rev. John Fitzpatrick, Irish provincial superior, from Dublin, Ireland; and the Rev. John Kelly, bursar provincial of the International, from Rome, Italy.

The dinner-dance starts with cocktails at 6:30 p.m. and dinner at 7:30 p.m. Providing entertainment will be the All Ireland Champion "Gruppa Ceol" Children's Orchestra and Dancers, with music for dancing provided by Brian Bonner and his Arranmore Band.

The Pallottine Fathers provide worldwide missionary services. They are based in Michigan at the Pallottine House in Wyandotte. The Pallottine House was donated by the late William L. Cahalan, Wayne Circuit Judge and former Wayne County prosecutor. The Rev. Stephen Keough leads the Michigan Pallottine Fathers.

Being honored at the dinner will be Bridle Delaney, RN, who has volunteered for more than 20 years for the Pallottine causes in Michigan and Texas.

Tickets are \$40 per person, and can be obtained by calling (734) 285-2966.

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