

Lodi plastic blaze spurs health warning from air quality monitors

By Christina Cornejo

Lodi News-Sentinel, Wednesday, November 9, 2016

A large fire burned through large bales of recycled plastic at Epic Plastics early Wednesday morning near Turner Road and Stockton Street. No structures were damaged and no one was injured, but the resulting smoke has prompted health warnings from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution District.

Lodi Fire Engine 2 was dispatched at 3:15 a.m. to what was reported as a small recycled plastic bale fire. The crew soon realized the fire was more serious and called for an additional engine, a ladder truck and a battalion chief.

With nearby structures threatened, Lodi Fire Battalion Chief Brad Doell requested a full structure fire team of four engines and a ladder truck. He also requested that the City of Stockton and Woodbridge Fire help to cover two of Lodi's stations for emergency calls while they fought the fire with additional engine, ladder truck and battalion chief from Stockton.

It took about an hour to get the blaze under control, however, there were still plastic bales smoldering through the remainder of Wednesday morning.

"When plastic gets hot, it burns with an intense ferocity because it's a petroleum product," Doell said. "It melts and creates a hard shell so there is smoldering inside the bales."

Several charred and melted blocks were scattered throughout the yard.

Crews were waiting for an excavator by 10 a.m. to break apart several inches of melted plastic and better access the areas that were still burning.

Despite how close the fire came to surrounding buildings, firefighters were able to defend them well from the blaze.

Doell said that the fire department would be speaking more with the business owners about their storage methods for the plastic. This is the second fire at this location in the past year, Doell said.

Much of the problem with this fire was the lack of defensible space between the blocks of flammable plastic material and nearby buildings.

In dealing with this fire, environmental concerns were taken into account due to the effect of burning plastic on the air and the potential for water runoff and contamination.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution District was monitoring the air and issued a health cautionary statement for Lodi and San Joaquin County until the fire is extinguished and the smoke has all dispersed.

Smoke from fires produces fine particulate matter, which can cause serious health problems including lung disease, asthma attacks and increased risk of heart attacks and strokes. Sensitive individuals, older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure and stay indoors during these situations, according to the Air Pollution District.

Public Works also prevented a majority of the water runoff from the fire fight from reaching the river and was monitoring the wastewater.

Firefighters were expected to remain on scene for several hours to help manage the last smoldering areas of the fire. The fire is currently under investigation and no cause has been identified yet.

Fire at Lodi plastic plant extinguished

By Richard Chang

Sacramento Bee, Thurs. November 9, 2016

A two-alarm fire that broke out early Wednesday at a Lodi plastic plant was extinguished in less than five hours.

The incident at the Epic Plastics recycling facility on North Stockton Street and East Turner Road began just before 3:54 a.m., according to Lodi Fire Chief Larry Rooney.

"They had large recycling bales on fire," he said. "When we got there, the flames were about 80 feet in the air."

The department deployed all of the city's six engines and two trucks. The cause of the fire remains under investigation.

Rooney said the storage bales consisted of plastic bottles, which are used by Epic to manufacture landscape edging. The fire prompted the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to issue an air quality warning for residents.

The fire was extinguished by about 8:30 a.m.

Fire at recycling facility called suspicious

By Jason Anderson

Stockton Record, Thursday, November 10, 2016

LODI — Fire investigators in Lodi are looking into a suspicious two-alarm fire that sent flames shooting several stories into the sky and prompted pollution officials to issue an air quality warning in San Joaquin County.

The Lodi Fire Department received a report of a fire about 3:15 a.m. Wednesday at the Epic Plastics recycling facility on East Turner Road just west of North Stockton Street. When crews arrived, they observed 80-foot flames in the storage yard and determined the fire was consuming storage bales consisting of plastic bottles, Battalion Chief Brad Doell said.

Nearly 30 firefighters on five engines and two ladder trucks responded to battle the blaze, including one engine and one truck from the Stockton Fire Department, Doell said. The Woodbridge Fire District sent an engine company to Lodi to cover emergency calls in the city.

Doell said it took 60 to 80 minutes to contain the fire, which was confined to the storage yard. No structures were damaged, but an electrical service drop that serves a neighboring business was damaged, cutting off power to the business.

Doell said the cause of the fire was still under investigation, but he added that it was "suspicious in nature."

"Our fire investigation team is actively investigating and they will determine whether or not there is sufficient evidence to get the Police Department involved," Doell said.

Doell said it was the second fire crews have battled at Epic Plastics in about a year. He said he believed the earlier blaze was caused by a camp fire.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District issued an air quality warning for residents of the county, particularly those in Lodi. The warning was lifted when the fire was extinguished and the smoke had dispersed, Outreach and Communications Representative Anthony Presto said.