



## Investigation Module Report

### Case Details

**Case Number:** SFM-2023-0783  
**Case Status:** Closed  
**Disposition:** Undetermined  
**Lead Investigator:** Roline, Levi  
**Start Date:** 10/14/2023 10:08:38  
**Primary Fire Department:** Caledonia Fire Department  
**Law Enforcement:** Houston County Sheriff's Office  
**Electric Company Name:** MiEnergy Co-Op

**Case Name:** Miken Facility Fire-Caledonia  
**Confidentiality:** None  
**Fire Cause:** Undetermined  
**End Date:** 11/07/2023 15:15:45  
**Secondary Fire Department:** Houston, Spring Grove, Eitzen, Brownsville  
**Private Investigators:** Ernest Gaichas, Traveler's Insurance FIU  
**Gas Company Name:** MN Energy

### Scene Details

**Arrived At Scene:** 10/14/2023 15:19:14  
**Scene Secured:** Yes  
**Security Manner:** Presence at Scene

**Authority To Enter:** Emergency/Exigent  
**Securing Agency:** Caledonia Fire Department

### Case Narrative

**Case Background:** At approximately 12:00 pm on 10/14/2023, I, Deputy State Fire Marshal Levi Roline was notified by the State Duty Officer to contact the Caledonia Fire Department in reference to a large manufacturing facility fire. I made contact with Fire Chief Kevin Jacobson, and it was agreed I would respond to the scene immediately. Upon arrival at the scene, I met with Chief Jacobson, who stated that fire suppression and overhaul efforts were ongoing. The fire scene examination was conducted under exigent circumstances.

**Case Narrative:** A fire occurred in a commercial manufacturing facility. No injuries or fatalities were reported as a result of this fire.

**Investigation Comments:** This report relates to and compiles information and efforts described and performed during this investigation. This report and examination are also a reflection of my training, education, and experience. A systematic approach was used to compile factual data and to analyze the facts to establish the area of origin(s) and then to investigate the cause, circumstances, conditions, or agencies that brought the ignition source, fuel, and oxygen together. The Scientific Method was utilized during this investigation as recommended by the 2021 edition of NFPA 921, Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations.

#### Exterior Scene Examination:

The exterior scene examination began on the south side of the structure and continued around the building in a counter-clockwise fashion. The involved structure was a large manufacturing facility of multiple building construction types. There were portions of the facility of post/beam construction and other areas that had been added on to the structure over time. The exterior wall and roof coverings were metal siding and roofing.

From the exterior south side of the structure, significant structural collapse and damage was observed. There was a corner portion of wall standing near the southeast corner of the structure. A majority of the rest of the building was observed to have been damaged or moved by heavy machinery. Heavy machinery was actively operating at the site. (LHR\_0001-0002)

There was a similar significant degree of damage present along the east side of the structure. Upon arriving at the northeast corner of the structure, there was a portion of roof that had collapsed inward with significant oxidation damage to the exterior wall and roof coverings. (LHR\_0005-0012)

On the north side of the structure there was a small service building that was connected to the greater manufacturing facility on its south side. This service building demonstrated soot deposition but minimal fire damage. (LHR\_0017-19)

The greater manufacturing facility on the north side demonstrated structural collapse of a majority of the wall structures. This damage was similar to that noted on the west exterior side of the structure. (LHR\_0028-37)

There were several utility entrances for both gas and electric utilities for the manufacturing facility. There was smoke and fire damage adjacent to or near all of these utility entrances. A majority of the utility entrances demonstrated physical damage consistent with structural collapse or heavy machinery. (LHR\_0020, LHR\_0024)

#### Interior Scene Examination:

Due to the significant structural collapse and damage present at the scene, a limited interior scene examination was conducted. While present at the scene, there were several small fire that involved metal products that were unable to be suppressed. The interior of the footprint of the building was photographed but no delayering operations were performed.

Due to the totality of damage present following excavator operations, comprehensive fire effect and fire pattern analysis was significantly compromised. There was discoloration, charring, and deformation damage present to a majority of the contents of the building (sporting equipment, sporting balls, protective gear) as well as the structural components of the building. (LHR\_0040-0062)

#### Other Documents Reviewed:

#### Security Cameras/Surveillance Footage

During the exterior scene examination, the area immediately surrounding the fire scene was examined for security cameras present in the area that may have captured the events leading up to the fire. There were no cameras located by myself, the fire departments, or sheriff's office that were active and recording in the area.

#### NFPA 921 2021 Edition:

The following are relevant citations from NFPA 921, Guide to Fire and Explosion Investigations:

##### Section 19.6.5.1 Cause Undetermined

In circumstances where all hypotheses have been rejected, or if two or more hypotheses cannot be rejected, the only choice for the investigator is to conclude that the fire cause, or specific causal factors, is undetermined. It is improper to opine a specific fire cause, ignition source, or fuel that has no evidence to support it even though all other such hypothesized elements were eliminated.

##### 19.7.4 Undetermined Fire Cause

The final opinion is only as good as the quality of the data used in reaching that opinion. If the level of certainty of the opinion is only "possible" or "suspected," the fire cause is undetermined. This decision as to the quality of data and level of certainty of the opinions rests with the investigator.

## Fire Ignition Sequence

**Fire Cause:** Undetermined    **Area Of Origin:** Processing/manufacturing area, workroom

**Heat Source:** Undetermined

**Material Ignited:** Undetermined

## Fire and Smoke Spread Information

**Fire Spread Materials:** Confined to building of origin

## Weather

**Temperature:** 53

**Relative Humidity:** 69

**Wind Speed:** 13

**Wind Direction:** NNE

**Precipitation:** 0.0

**Lightning:** No

**Information Obtained From:** <https://www.wunderground.com/history/daily/us/wi/la-crosse/KLSE/date/2023-10-14>  
Internet

## Property Information

**Business / Property Name:** Miken Sports Facility

**County:** Houston

**Address:** 131 Bissen Street

**City/State:** Caledonia, Minnesota 55921

**Postal Code:** 55921

**Property Use:** Manufacturing, Processing

**Structure Occupancy:** Unoccupied

**Sprinkler Standpipes:** None

**Alarm Type:** Automatic

**Smoke Detectors Present:** Yes

**Smoke Detectors Performance:** Unknown

### Owner Occupant Information

#### Owner Occupant Type

Corporate Principal Owner

### Insurance

Insurance Company	Policy Number	Claim Number	Effective Date	Expiration Date
Traveler's Insurance	KTJ-CMB-1L27301-1-23	FSY6480	09/30/2023	09/30/2024

## Witness Statements

Type	First Name	Last Name	Date Of Birth	Witness Information Comments
------	------------	-----------	---------------	------------------------------

Fire Department	Kevin	Jacobson	<p>The following is a summary of non-recorded interview statements from Caledonia Fire Chief Kevin Jacobson. Chief Jacobson was the incident commander for the fire.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Upon fire department arrival there was significant smoke and fire present from the northeast side of the facility.</li> <li>-Chief Jacobson stated that fire crews began a defensive attack of the structure.</li> <li>-Fire crews initially believed that there was a large amount of hazardous materials stored within the northeast side of the facility.</li> <li>-Chief Jacobson advised that crews attempted to open the roof and wall coverings to suppress the fire on the interior of the structure but encountered several layers of roof and wall coverings.</li> <li>-Chief Jacobson advised that the only way that the fire department was able to access the seat of the fire was by utilizing an excavator from a nearby excavating business.</li> <li>-The north building was disconnected from the south building by knocking down the connecting hallway with the excavator.</li> <li>-Chief Jacobson advised that a drone was utilized to locate hot spots, and that their suppression effort encompassed the entirety of the building.</li> <li>-Chief Jacobson was unsure of the cause of the fire.</li> <li>-Firefighting foam was applied throughout the structure, and a large amount of water was applied.</li> <li>-There were several hot-spots identified as burning metal that were difficult to suppress.</li> <li>-Chief Jacobson did not notice anything odd or out of the ordinary during the course of the fire suppression effort.</li> </ul>
Other	Beth	Morey	<p>The following is a summary of non-recorded interview statements with Beth Morey(BM), Environmental Health and Safety Coordinator for Miken Sports.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-BM stated that there was a fire alarm system present for the involved structure as well as the office facility located on the north side of the building.</li> <li>-BM was unsure of the activation mode for the fire alarm within the manufacturing building.</li> <li>-BM advised that the fire alarm panel would have been located within the southeast side of the building and that area had collapsed.</li> <li>-BM stated that there was a report of a heat detector activation, but was unsure of the timeframe of the heat detector relative to the fire department response.</li> <li>-The fire alarm was monitored by Security Plus.</li> <li>-BM provided a list of potential hazardous materials that were located within the building, as well as a building map.</li> <li>-BM was unsure of the potential cause of the fire.</li> </ul>
Other	Doug	Heimer	<p>The following is a summary of non-recorded interview statements with Doug Heimer (DH), Plant Manager for Miken Sports.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-DH stated that since it was the weekend, there should not have been any active manufacturing ongoing on the day of the fire.</li> <li>-DH advised that the only person who would have been within the facility would have been their cleaning staff member, Mark Myhre.</li> <li>-DH stated that there were no recent operational issues regarding the manufacturing processes.</li> <li>-There were no noted disgruntled employees on the manufacturing line.</li> <li>-The facility would have been secured and locked from outside person(s) making entry.</li> <li>-There was no fire sprinkler protection within the manufacturing building.</li> <li>-The security cameras within the building recorded to a server that was located within the structure.</li> <li>-The server room was destroyed during the course of the fire.</li> <li>-DH was unsure of what could have caused the fire.</li> </ul>

Other	John	Baer	<p>The following is a summary of non-recorded interview statements with John Baer (JB), Vice President for the Rawlings Company.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-JB stated that the company had recently gone through downsizing of operations, including the lay-off of approximately 49 employees.</li> <li>-This downsizing occurred in April of 2023.</li> <li>-There were no significant issues or problems related to the downsizing.</li> <li>-There were no disgruntled employees, the layoffs had already concluded several months ago.</li> <li>-JB was unsure of what could have caused the fire.</li> <li>-JB stated that the commercial insurance policy for the building was through Traveler's Insurance.</li> </ul>
-------	------	------	---

Discover of Fire	Mark	Myhre	10/28/1953	<p>The following is a summary of recorded interview statements with Mark Myhre (MM), janitorial contractor for Miken Sports.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-MM stated he was at the shipping building (north building) at approximately 7:15 am on the date of the fire.</li> <li>-MM had plugged in his floor scrubber to charge, before leaving the property to go clean at a dental office in town.</li> <li>-MM returned to the property at approximately 10:00 and opened a door adjacent to the lunchroom.</li> <li>-MM stated he could hear alarms going off within the structure.</li> <li>-MM left the building and contacted 911, but his phone died.</li> <li>-MM located a passerby and advised of the fire.</li> <li>-MM believed he was the first to contact 911 in reference to this fire.</li> <li>-MM pulled around the building and stated that the area with the garage doors on the northeast side of the building had fire and smoke emanating from it first.</li> <li>-MM did not enter the involved structure.</li> <li>-MM did not see any smoke or fire from the involved structure prior to leaving to go to the dental office.</li> <li>-MM had been cleaning at the Miken Facility for approximately 16 years.</li> <li>-MM stated that the last time he would have been inside the involved building would have been on Thursday evening.</li> <li>-MM was unsure of what could have caused the fire.</li> <li>-There was smoke within the north building, no fire conditions.</li> <li>-MM stated that the building was heated by forced air natural gas furnaces.</li> <li>-MM was unaware of any electrical/HVAC/gas utility problems during the course of his work at the facility.</li> </ul>
------------------	------	-------	------------	--

**Case Conclusion**

**Case Conclusion:** Area of Origin:

Based on the fire scene examination, witness statements, and other data reviewed, the area of origin for the fire was determined to be within the south manufacturing facility based on the following data:

- The reporting parties advised that there were smoke/fire alarms sounding from within the south and north buildings.
- There were no fire conditions present within the north buildings.
- No smoke or fire conditions were noted from the south building until fire was seen on the northeast side of the facility near the garage doors.
- The fire department reported that there were several layers of wall and roof coverings.
- These several layers of wall and roof coverings could potentially obscure fire travel from view from other locations within the structure.
- The area was significantly damaged by the excavators utilized for the fire suppression effort.

Hypothesis Development:

Due to the high degree of damage, causal hypotheses were not able to be developed, tested, and eliminated in congruence with the scientific method in accordance with NFPA 921. (Section 19.6.5.1, 19.7.4)

Conclusion:

Based on the fire scene examination, witness statements, and other data reviewed, the area of origin

for the fire was determined to be within the manufacturing building. Due to the high degree of damage resulting in the inability to fully test and eliminate causal hypotheses in congruence with NFPA 921, the cause classification of the fire is undetermined.

This investigation report was based upon information available at the time of writing. If further information becomes available at a later date, the case may be reopened and additional data added at a later time.

**Lead Investigator:** Roline, Levi

**Lead Investigator  
Signature:** *Levi H Roline*

**Submitted Date:** 11/07/2023 15:15:45