

Lingering Danger of Atchison Chemical Cloud Assessed

(KAIR)--Clean-up continued Friday afternoon, with hazmat crews called in to assist, following a morning chemical spill at Atchison's MGP Ingredients.

Atchison City Manager Trey Cocking tells MSC News it happened shortly after 8:00 when two chemicals were inadvertently mixed, as MGP Ingredients was taking delivery of one of the two chemicals. "When that chemical that is used in their processing was inadvertently introduced into another chemical, it produced an off-gassing effect that put a chlorine-like gas cloud throughout the city."

As afternoon turned to early evening, the number of those who experienced affects from the chemical cloud grew clearer.

Cocking says 72 people were treated at the Atchison Hospital, while 30 sought treatment elsewhere in the region. The vast majority of those, Cocking says, were treated and released.

Among those who sought medical aid were 12 City of Atchison employees, 7 from the public works office, 3 from the police department, and 2 from the fire department.

Cocking says all of those affected employees were treated and released.

A key concern being voiced from residents are lingering affects of the chemical.

Cocking says a thorough review made through federal agencies and sources, including toxicology experts, indicates minimal, lingering hazards, due partly to the day's sunshine, which breaks down chlorine.

According to Cocking, EPA officials remain in Atchison, and testing conducted by the agency verifies that no dangerous levels of the chemical have been found.

At the direction of Atchison County Emergency Preparedness Director Wes Lanter, Atchison's USD 409 evacuated students, but returned to class by late morning.

The Elementary School was not included. Superintendent Dr. Susan Myers called the situation "unprecedented."

As the chemical plume blanketed the city, Benedictine College also evacuated, along with Atchison Child Care, as local residents were told to stay inside homes and businesses, with windows and doors closed.

The official “all clear” was given shortly before the start of the afternoon.

The Atchison Hospital is asking anyone who feels they were exposed to the chemicals to shower at home, take a Benadryl and breathe cool air if experiencing nasal congestion, cough or a sore throat. Those experiencing a shortness of breath, or wheezing, should seek medical assistance.

According to the City of Atchison, the Center for Toxicology and Environmental Health has set up a hotline to receive phone calls from area residents regarding any health concerns you may have. To speak with a toxicologist, call (913) 286-5190.

MGP Ingredients has released the following statements:

Update from MGP on Chemical Release

ATCHISON, Kan., October 22, 2016—As an update to the chemical release that occurred at MGP’s Atchison, Kansas facility, company management issued the following statement:

MGP cares deeply about the health and safety of our employees and our community. Following the incident Friday morning, Oct. 21, at our plant in Atchison, Kansas, we have worked hard to make sure the immediate situation has been resolved. Likewise, we continue to work closely with the appropriate regulatory agencies to fully understand the cause and mitigate the chance of a similar incident occurring in the future.

At this time, we understand residents and several employees were treated and released from the hospital. One employee is receiving further treatment.

We are extremely grateful for the support the community offers us, especially in terms of the local firefighters, law enforcement and hospital staff.

More information will become available as the company is able to provide additional details.

For Immediate Release

Chemical Release Occurs at MGP’s Kansas Facility

ATCHISON, Kan., October 21, 2016— At approximately 8 a.m. today, a chemical release occurred at MGP Ingredients’ plant in Atchison, Kansas. The reaction resulted in emissions venting into the air. As of 11 a.m., based on observations by local officials, the emissions had dispersed. Local officials reported some injuries,

mostly respiratory issues, following the release.

MGP Ingredients has reported the event to the EPA and Kansas and local authorities, and is cooperating fully to investigate and ensure that all appropriate response actions are taken. MGP has also engaged outside experts to assist the investigation and response.

There was no significant damage to its Atchison plant as a result of this incident. No other MGP facilities, including its distillery in Lawrenceburg, Indiana, are affected by this incident.

About MGP

Celebrating its 75th anniversary, MGP is a leading supplier of premium distilled spirits and specialty wheat proteins and starches. Distilled spirits include bourbon and rye whiskeys, gins and vodkas, which are carefully crafted through a combination of art and science and backed by a long history of experience. The company's proteins and starches are created in the same manner and provide a host of functional, nutritional and sensory benefits for a wide range of food products. MGP additionally is a top producer of high quality industrial alcohol for use in both food and non-food applications. The company is headquartered in Atchison, Kansas, where distilled alcohol products and food ingredients are produced. Premium spirits are also distilled and matured at the company's facility in Lawrenceburg, Indiana. For more information, visit mgpingredients.com.

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