

Chief Whiteford: Firefighters Able To Contain Blaze To R.P. Lumber Out Building Monday, Save Other Structures

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
February 16 2021 12:28 PM



EDWARDSVILLE - Cold temperatures and high winds made the Edwardsville Fire Department and other added fire departments battle with the R.P. Lumber Fire in Edwardsville difficult on Monday.

At 12:25 p.m. Monday, February 16, the Edwardsville Fire Department was called to a structure fire at RP Lumber located at 514 E. Vandalia St., Edwardsville. Fire departments that assisted with the fire include Collinsville, Glen Carbon, Hamel, Holiday Shores, Troy, and Wood River.

"In spite of the high winds and cold temperatures, firefighters were able to keep the fire contained to the building of origin," Fire Chief Whiteford said. "High winds pushed heat and flames across the street causing heat damage, melting siding and breaking windows, on three houses closest to the building on fire but firefighters were able to keep them from catching fire. All should be repairable."

Whiteford continued: "Edwardsville Fire Department arrived to find a storage building on fire," Edwardsville Fire Chief James Whiteford said. "Heavy cross winds were producing a wind-driven fire that was impinging on three houses across the street. Additionally, there were storage buildings located at each end of the building which was on fire. The fire was upgraded to a second alarm to bring in three additional mutual aid fire departments to the scene.

"Ice and snow caused slip hazards and hoses froze quickly when water stopped flowing. "Wind was blowing at a sustained 15-20 m.p.h. with gusts up to 28 m.p.h. feeding the fire and creating low wind chill factors. Over the course of the event, several hose couplings and appliances were damaged by ice.

"High winds also pushed heavy heat and flames into power lines causing a power outage for a number of residents in the area. Ameren Illinois Electric was called to the scene to manage the downed power lines. Ameren's website reported over 1,000 accounts were effected by the power outage. During the fire, a gas line inside the building burned through producing a natural gas fed fire."

Chief Whiteford said Ameren Gas was called to the scene to turn off the gas but it was late in the night before this could be accomplished due to mechanical and other issues brought on by the cold temperatures.

"The gas was finally turned off after midnight, fire crews extinguished the remaining fire and cleared the scene at 1:30 a.m.," Chief Whiteford said. "One civilian was treated and released for minor smoke inhalation. No other injuries were reported."

Whiteford closed by saying: "These firefighters did a great job of containing this fire to only one building, especially considering the conditions. The power outage and extreme cold caused a number of area residents to inquire about warming shelters. The City of

Edwardsville opened the Wilkey Theater as place for people to warm up, but it was unused and closed down yesterday evening after Ameren was able to restore power to all but three locations."