

# Firefighters stop Ardent Mills third-floor blaze; workers safe

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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Alton firefighters were called to a fire at 3:30 p.m. Saturday at Ardent Mills in downtown Alton and when they arrived they had zero visibility because of smoke, which made it difficult.

Alton Fire Chief Bernie Sebold said the start of the fire occurred in a large microwave on the third floor of the Ardent Mills structure.

“The fire was in the microwave itself and it was about 50-feet long and 8-feet tall,” Sebold said. “A conveyor ran into it.”

The fire chief praised Ardent Mills’ staff for moving quickly and shutting ventilators off to reduce airflow and also getting employees out of the building.



“They were well coached and out of the building quickly,” he said. “They didn’t want us to use water on the machine if we could avoid it but as it continued to grow we no longer had the option.”

Wood River and East Alton fire personnel joined the Alton Fire Department on the scene. Traffic on a section of Broadway was closed for several hours and vehicles were routed to Sixth Street.

Ardent Mills was once called ConAgra. The flour milling company headquarters are in Colorado.

All Alton firemen on duty responded to the scene and several off duty also were on hand.

Sebold praised the firemen for their quick response to the floor and working through some extremely difficult visibility conditions in the beginning of the fire.

