

Investigators may wrap up NDK report by December's end

By **Betsy Lopez Fritscher**
RRSTAR.COM

Posted Aug 25, 2010 @ 10:18 PM

BELVIDERE — The cause of a fatal explosion at a Belvidere crystal-manufacturing plant may be answered when the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board finishes its report by the end of the year.

Inside the 55,000-square-foot building at 701 Crystal Parkway, which houses NDK Crystal and NDK America Inc., were eight 50-foot-tall, 75-ton vessels in which the company grew synthetic quartz crystal.

One of the vessels exploded Dec. 7. Debris from the explosion struck and killed a truck driver at the nearby Interstate 90 tollway oasis. Other debris struck and caused damage to the nearby Grupo Antolin plant.

Investigations Supervisor John Vorderbrueggen and others from the investigation board visited NDK in late June to witness the move of the failed vessel away from the building. The independent federal agency is charged with investigating industrial chemical accidents.

"Meetings were conducted at that time to finalize the test protocol," he said in an e-mail. "The large fragment that struck the Grupo Antolin building was then shipped to a machine shop and sectioned for detailed examination. The metallurgy analyses and physical testing is proceeding to determine the failure mechanism."

In the meantime, the vessel remains on NDK property in a secure storage area. Before the end of September, the CSB will meet with NDK officials and experts to review results from the testing and examination.

Vorderbrueggen thinks the investigation is on schedule and that the board can complete remaining work before its deadline.

"Over the next few months we will be completing the analysis and review of the industry design and operations standards as well as state regulations related to pressure vessels operated at very high pressure," he said. "The current schedule is to complete the final report and submit it to the board for consideration by late December."

NDK President Ken Hennessy, who supervises both NDK Crystal and NDK America at the plant, said the company continues to wait on the report's release before deciding what to do with the NDK Crystal portion of the building.

"It's still too early to tell," he said. "We won't make any decisions like that until the CSB's report is finalized."

Reach staff writer *Betsy López Fritscher* at bfritsch@rrstar.com or 815-544-3452.

Copyright 2010 Rockford Register Star. Some rights reserved

Comments (0)

Login or register to post a comment:

Login

Username:

Password:

Forgot password

Register

Email:

First Name:

Last Name:

I agree to the terms of use

I am over 13 years of age

NOTE: Your inbox must accept emails from "no-reply@gatehousemedia.com"



