

Chemical reaction blamed for Marjol site fire

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A chemical reaction between rainwater and pelletized lime near hay bales apparently touched off a small weekend fire at the Marjol Battery site in Throop, a spokeswoman said Tuesday.

The fire was quickly extinguished by Throop firefighters, and no lead-contaminated materials were involved, said Lisa Ayers of Advanced GeoSciences, which represents site owner Gould Electronics.

Borough Fire Chief Eric Hartshorn said firefighters who responded Saturday about 3 a.m. found some hay bales burning, with the flames threatening an excavator. The fire was put out before it spread to the machinery.

The fire occurred "nowhere near" the containment area where lead-contaminated soil and battery casings have been consolidated as part of the site cleanup, Chief Hartshorn said.

A state police fire marshal was called to investigate.

Ms. Ayers blamed the fire on rainwater reacting with pelletized lime used at the Marjol site to dry out wet sediment. She said there is a chemical reaction that generates heat when water comes in contact with lime pellets bonded together with lignosulfonates.

The lime storage area is covered, she said, but there was some lime outside the cover "that reacted with the rainfall and generated heat that caught the hay bales on fire."

Ms. Ayers said Gould is taking measures to prevent another fire, including removing all combustible materials from the lime storage area. The hay bales have been replaced by plastic Jersey barriers, and a thicker cover has been installed and will be anchored in place with sandbags to prevent moisture from getting into the pellet stockpile.

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