

Beat: News

Explosion at New Hampshire ball bearing factory injures 15

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USPA News - A large explosion at a ball bearing manufacturer in southern New Hampshire on Monday left 15 people injured, two of them critically, emergency officials said. The cause was not immediately known but there was no evidence of terrorism.

The incident happened at approximately 3:35 p.m. local time on Monday when an explosion occurred at New Hampshire Ball Bearings (NHBB) at 175 Jaffrey Road in Peterborough, a town in Hillsborough County, located about 25 miles (40 kilometers) southwest of Manchester. "We know there was an explosion, that it blew out windows and that there are injuries," said Marc Goldberg, a spokesman for New Hampshire Governor Maggie Hassan. "Our state Emergency Operations Center has been activated to coordinate state support and we have sent resources to the scene to assist first responders." First responders from Peterborough Fire and Rescue (PFR) reported heavy explosion damage and a column of smoke, after which commanders upgraded the incident to a second alarm and notified nearby Monadnock Community Hospital to prepare for a possible mass casualty incident, PFR spokesman Eric Bowman said. Fifteen people were eventually taken by ambulances to Monadnock Community Hospital, where two burn victims were reported to be in a critical condition. Seven of the victims were treated and released within hours while two others were airlifted to another facility, Bowman said. The incident was eventually scaled up to a fourth alarm, with units from more than 10 other towns also responding. A decontamination procedure, that included a response team from the Keene Fire Department, was set up at the scene to handle any possible chemical exposures. The cause of Monday's explosion was not immediately known, but no fire broke out and authorities said there was no evidence of terrorism. New Hampshire State Police and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) will assist Peterborough Fire and Rescue in their investigation. "It was reported that the explosion could be felt at neighboring businesses up to a quarter of a mile (400 meters) away. One building was checked for structural integrity and deemed safe," Bowman said. NHBB employees at the site were sent home and the building will be closed until it is considered safe and structurally sound. "My thoughts and prayers go out to those injured in today's explosion, to their families and loved ones, and to the entire Peterborough area where NH Ball Bearings is such an important member of the community," said Governor Maggie Hassan in response to the explosion. "While we are still gathering details about the explosion, we are very encouraged to hear that all employees have been accounted for." New Hampshire Ball Bearings is a manufacturer of complex bearing assemblies for the aerospace, defense, medical, dental, and high technology markets. The company operates three manufacturing facilities in the United States. NHBB was founded in Peterborough in 1946 and was purchased in 1985 by the global manufacturing conglomerate Minebea.

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