

Dozens battle ethanol plant blaze



By Joe Tamborello

Freeport firefighters joined area departments at the Badger State Ethanol plant in Monroe on Monday. Freeport was asked to bring its ladder truck to the fire, which broke out at 2:30 Monday afternoon.

By Cara Spoto
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Monroe, Wis. -

Nearly 60 firefighters from departments across southern Wisconsin and northwestern Illinois responded to a blaze that broke out at [Badger State Ethanol](#) in Monroe, Wis. Monday afternoon and took most of the night to douse.

The fire started at around 2:30 p.m. in a dryer assembly near the bottom of an 80-foot-high grain dryer, Monroe Fire Chief Daryl Rausch said. At 6:30 p.m. dozens of firefighters were still

working to weaken the blaze. No one was injured.

Rausch said it would likely take most of the night to put the fire out entirely.

"The fire has been under control for a couple of hours, but we are still working at getting all of the hot spots," Rausch said as smoke billowed from the tower, blotting out its form.

Fire departments from Juda, Monticello, Browtown, Brodhead, Orangeville, and Cedarville responded to the fire, as did the Freeport Fire Department, one of three departments that brought ladder trucks to help battle the highest hot spots.

"This a portion of the plant that reclaims a portion of the corn that is not used for ethanol, a part called the germ," Rausch explained. "Right now we're just trying to open up all the duct work, get all of the hot spots and get the rest of the fire out. "

With snow and chilling winds between zero and minus 5 degrees whipping about them, firefighters stood huddled next to silos and trucks waiting to go back and take another crack at the blaze.

A table stacked with containers of hot cocoa, Gatorade, and a platter of snow covered cheese, stood just feet away.

Volunteer firefighter, Carol Davis of Juda, had just finished working to remove insulation from the dryer, when she and roughly 10 other firefighters were force to withdraw so the ladder trucks could do their work.

When asked if she regretted being a volunteer when the weather was so bad, she said: "Oh no. This isn't must worse than a silo fire."

