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## Silo fire draws crowd

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By Brian Gray

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MONROE -- Four fire departments responded to a silo fire Monday at Badger State Ethanol, some on the scene for more than seven hours.

Monroe firefighters were called to the ethanol plant around 2:45 p.m. and found a fire in the unloading equipment at the base of the silo.

Firefighters from Juda, Brodhead and Monticello assisted at the scene. Green County Emergency Medical Services, Argyle EMS, Green County Emergency Management and the Monroe Police Department also assisted. The Orangeville Fire Department was asked to fill in at the Monroe station.

Lt. Dan Briggs of the Monroe Fire Department served as incident commander at the scene until Monroe Fire Chief Daryl Rausch arrived around 8 p.m.

Briggs said when firefighters arrived they were



**Firefighters examine a silo Monday at Badger State Ethanol in Monroe.**

**Firefighters from four departments battled a silo fire and a small smoke and dust**

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informed of a natural gas odor coming from a silo. The silo contained a new grain germ product that had heated under compression.

**explosion in the silo.**

Times photo: Brenda Steurer

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Workers at the plant told Briggs a gas meter on one of the silos showed that hydrogen sulfide was present and had reached a toxic level. Hydrogen sulfide is an odorless, toxic and flammable gas.

Briggs said ethanol plant employees were able to dump the product from the silo to the ground and then took the product from the ground to a remote storage area.

Eventually, he said, firefighters saw smoke rolling from the top of the auger outside of the silo.

"There was suddenly a whistling sound and heavy black smoke from the auger area and the mail silo walk-in door," Briggs said. "The top of the silo began to crease inward at the silo cap."



**Firefighters douse a silo with water Monday in an attempt to put out a fire which started inside.**

**According to Badger State employees, the silo contained a new grain germ product that heated up under compression.**

Times photo: Supplied

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Rausch said a collapse inside the silo caused a small smoke and dust explosion in the silo. Rausch said it caused significant damage to the silo, but no dollar estimate of damages was available.

Firefighters remained at the scene until about 10:15 p.m.

Rausch praised the departments and firefighters at the scene and said everyone worked well together.

Emergency personnel used the SLICE parking lot as a staging area, and spectators who congregated on the Cheese Country Trail were asked to leave by the Monroe Police Department. The Green County Sheriff's Department was asked to clear the air space above the plant.

The exact cause of the fire was not known this morning.

Rausch said the silo received "significant" damage but no dollar estimate was available.

Rausch said more information would be provided late Tuesday morning.

Badger State Ethanol president and general manager Gary Kramer was not available for comment this morning.

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