

UPDATE | Water customers not impacted by chemical plant explosion in Kanawha County

 [wsaz.com/2020/12/09/shelter-in-place-in-effect-after-chemical-plant-explosion-in-kanawha-county](https://www.wsaz.com/2020/12/09/shelter-in-place-in-effect-after-chemical-plant-explosion-in-kanawha-county)

By WSAZ News Staff

UPDATE 12/9/20 @ 11:01 a.m.

KANAWHA COUNTY, W.Va. (WSAZ) – West Virginia American Water says customers are not impacted by the chemical plant explosion.

It happened around 10 p.m. Tuesday at the Optima Chemicals Company along W. Dupont Ave. in Belle.

The water company says customers will not see any changes to their water services.

West Virginia American Water's Kanawha Valley water treatment plant is located along the Elk River, which is a separate source water supply from the chemical plant.

According to the company, no changes have occurred in the finished water quality leaving the company's water treatment plants and no drinking water advisories have been issued.

The cause of the explosion is under investigation.

UPDATE 12/9/20 @ 8:24 a.m.

KANAWHA COUNTY, W.Va. (WSAZ) – New details are being released about an explosion at the Optima Chemicals Company along W. Dupont Ave. in Belle overnight.

The explosion was reported around 10 p.m. Tuesday.

CW Sigman, the Kanawha County Emergency Management Director, tells WSAZ chlorine and methanol were included in the explosion.

The explosion sent large chunks of metal through the air.

Kanawha County Commission President Kent Carper said three people were transported to the hospital, while a fourth person took himself to seek treatment. Two of the people transported were from inside the plant. One person was severely injured.

There was a shelter in place for a two-mile radius late Tuesday night into Wednesday morning, according to dispatchers.

WSAZ has been told the explosion happened at a tenant company that operates at Chemours called Optima. It's still unclear what they produce at the plant.

Carper also says it does not appear any chemicals got into the Kanawha River.

The cause of the explosion is under investigation.

UPDATE 12/9/20 @ 2:32 a.m.

KANAWHA COUNTY, W.Va. (WSAZ) – A shelter-in-place order has been lifted, nearly four and a half hours after an explosion at the Optima Chemicals Company along W. Dupont Ave. in Belle.

The shelter in place was lifted about 2:30 Wednesday morning.

Rt. 60 has reopened between Campbells Creek and the Chelyan Bridge.

Kanawha County Commission President Kent Carper said three people were transported to the hospital, while a fourth person took himself to seek treatment. Two of the people transported were from inside the plant. The extent of their injuries is unknown at this time.

KANAWHA COUNTY, W.Va. (WSAZ) – A 2-mile radius shelter-in-place is in effect late Tuesday night into Wednesday morning after an explosion at along the Optima Chemicals Company West Dupont Avenue in Belle, Metro 911 dispatchers say.

Kanawha County Commission President Kent Carper said three people were transported to the hospital, while a fourth person took himself to seek treatment. Two of the people transported were from inside the plant. The extent of their injuries is unknown at this time.

As of just before 2 a.m. Wednesday, the commission reported the fire was still burning at the plant. They say first responders will have to let the fire burn out before they'll be able to go in and assess the scene. A determination about lifting the shelter-in-place will not be made until that assessment is made.

Dispatchers said there was “some type of explosion,” but the cause is unknown at this time.

James Mason, who's with KCEAA, said they have their mass causality teams and mass triage teams ready as a precautionary measure. There are reports of injuries but no specific details.

According to Metro 911, the shelter-in-place includes everyone between the Chelyan Bridge to Burning Springs. It includes all of Belle, Marmet, Chesapeake and Chelyan.

Metro 911 reports that U.S. 60 is shut down from Campbells Creek to the Chelyan Bridge due to the emergency.

Carper said at first they believed there was a barge accident, but they soon realized it was an incident at the plant.

He said they do not believe any chemicals got into the Kanawha River.

Carper said he hopes the shelter-in-place is lifted soon, but for now it is best to stay put and stay inside their homes for the safety of their families.

According to the Kanawha County Commission, the Kanawha County Emergency Operations Center has been activated. The number to reach it for non-emergency calls related to the incident is 304-746-8828.

Chemours released the following statement:

“An incident at one of the tenant companies at the Chemours site in Belle, West Virginia has resulted in a fire. Site responders are working to contain the fire. We have no further details at this time.”

U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., tweeted, “Gayle and I are praying for those at the Chemours plant in Belle & for our brave first responders who are running to the fire tonight. I urge all those in and near Belle to stay tuned to local media & follow instructions from local officials.”

This is a developing story. Keep checking the WSAZ app for the latest information.