

Water heater explodes in Horn Lake's maintenance shop

By Lela Garlington

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Just before four workers in Horn Lake's parks maintenance shop were about to leave work Tuesday afternoon, the building's electric hot water heater exploded knocking down interior and exterior walls and blowing a steel door off the door frame and lifting the mezzanine ceiling.

It shook another wall so hard that the Coke machine toppled over. The water heater's outer shell torpedoed and lodged itself under an office desk.

No one was hurt during the explosion. Horn Lake fire officials have not determined a cause.

"It was like somebody threw a grenade in here. It was that loud," said Sydney Adams, 25. He was among those unscathed.

"We are extremely lucky," said Horn Lake Mayor Nat Baker. "Typically, the workers are getting the sports scores from a television in the office, but the cable was out. It saved them."

Baker said a homeowner across from the shop told city officials that the explosion rattled his windows and home.

"We were on break and we were going to watch "Judge Mathis" (a television show). Instead we were sitting out here just talking," said Cory Stewart, 19, of Lake Comorant.

Both Stewart and Devin Wardlaw, also 19 and of Lake Comorant, said they ran from the building immediately.

The freak explosion happened around 2:40 p.m. Tuesday.

Adams said his wife was terrified when he told her what happened. They prayed that night that he survived.

Stewart said the only hint of something wrong was that he saw green water coming out of the faucet and the toilets earlier in the day. None of the workers thought anything about it other than the possibility of water crews were working on the lines.

"We are leaving it as is," said Parks Director John Willoughby while fire inspectors and insurance adjusters photograph and document the destruction.

Hopefully soon, Willoughby said, "We have got to get back to some kind of normal. It's hard to function without a parks maintenance shop."

The shop is located at 5633 Tulane and is behind the ball fields at the city's 300-acre Latimer Lakes Park. © 2012 Scripps Newspaper Group — Online