

Sparks set off fire on Ironworks roof

By Shaun Zinck szinck@beloitdailynews.com | Posted: Wednesday, September 10, 2014 4:00 pm

Sparks from welding tools went under an old roof in the Ironworks Building in downtown Beloit and ignited a fire on Tuesday morning.

Brad Austin, president of Corporate Contractors Inc., said crews were welding part of the metal structure going above “Center Spine Road” and he believed some of the sparks ignited the roof.

“Their fire extinguisher wouldn’t put it out, and that’s when we called the fire department,” he said. “We are totally renovating this (building) and there is a lot of work going. The fire was under an old section on the very back of the property.”

According to the press release from the Beloit Fire Department, the official cause of the fire is a “cutting torch on roof.” The estimated damage to the structure is about \$125,000, with the extent of the damage limited to the roof.

Beloit firefighters were called around 9:50 a.m., to the building at 655 Third St., and Beloit Police Capt. William Tyler said mutual aid was requested. When crews arrived on scene they saw heavy smoke and fire coming from the roof.

Fire engines from Harlem-Roscoe, Janesville, Rockton and South Beloit were on scene. No injuries were reported in the fire, Tyler said.

According to the release, firefighters had the fire extinguished around 10:25 a.m., and remained on the scene for a few hours to investigate the fire.

Austin said no businesses were located in the part of the building that caught fire. However, employees in Hendricks Commercial Properties (HCP) and AccuLynx were evacuated as part of the protocol, Tyler said.

Darlene Mohr and Joni Carpenter, employees of HCP, said she and other employees saw smoke and flames outside the conference room on the third floor, and they evacuated before the fire alarm went



Fire damages roof

Smoke billows from the roof of the Ironworks building on Tuesday morning. Officials said construction crews were welding near the roof when some of the sparks ignited part of the structure. Their fire extinguisher wasn't able to put out the flames, so the fire department was called.

off.

“We could see the fire out our back windows coming out of the roof,” Carpenter said, adding they heard the fire alarm as they were walking down the stairs to get out of the building.

Rob Gerbitz, COO of Hendricks Commercial Properties, said he was outside the building when he saw the smoke coming from the back of the property. He also confirmed that crews were working the part of the building near the Rock River when the fire started.

Hendricks Commercial Property is in the middle of renovating the Ironworks Building, including constructing the Center Spine Road, which will create more parking spaces for the businesses in the building. A metal structure is being installed above the road, and Austin said the crews were welding a few of the pieces together.

Gerbitz said Wednesday morning that crews were able to resume work in the area a couple hours after the fire was extinguished.

“It really didn’t slow us down too much at all,” he said, adding work was just starting on renovating the building that caught fire. “We were just doing the exterior work that will be going in front of the building.”

Gerbitz said the company was renovating the building for a potential business tenant. He added employees were allowed back in the building around 11:30 a.m.