



WARREN

## Mayor fires Police Commissioner William Dwyer after hiring dispute goes public

Dwyer: 'I was thrown out of my office'

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CLINTON TWP.

# BLAST HEARD AROUND MACOMB

## Investigation into what caused the fire and explosion underway



GREG GRENIER — FOR THE MACOMB DAILY

Debris rained down in a large radius as flames lit up the sky Monday night.



GINA JOSEPH — THE MACOMB DAILY

Marie Ainsworth holds a chunk of cement that blew across the road along with shrapnel, canisters and other chunks of steel Monday night.

## Neighbor on blast: 'It looked atomic'

By Gina Joseph  
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It was the explosion heard around Macomb County.

When a blast rocked Select Distributors, a warehouse full of vaping pens, flammable canisters and novelty items that was located in a former grocery store, residents from Shelby Township to St. Clair Shores reported seeing and feeling reverberations. For those on the ground at the time, the incident was startling both in size and scope.

At the scene Tuesday morning, there were debris and pieces of shrapnel, busted pipes and small canisters strewn across the street and in the driveways surrounding the property at 15 Mile Road and Groesbeck Highway.

Marie Ainsworth of Clinton Township lives in a townhouse just north of 15 Mile Road. She was in her basement watching TV just before 9 p.m. when it all started.

"I felt the earth shake," she said while surveying the area Tuesday morning. "I started up the stairs afraid of what I might see."

Ainsworth, 57, said she knew it was going to be something terrible.

"I go upstairs to my kitchen and I look up and see this mushroom of flames out the window. It looked atomic. My first thought was war," she said.

Ainsworth immediately thought perhaps some-

'ATOMIC' » PAGE 4

## Teen killed by falling debris at blast site, fire chief says

By Mitch Hotts  
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Clinton Township police and fire officials are working with Michigan State Police and federal ATF agents in trying to determine what caused a massive explosion and secondary blasts Monday night at a warehouse that killed a township resident, injured a firefighter and sent metal canisters flying through the air.

Authorities spent Tuesday on cleanup operations for Select Distributors, which shared a building with a business named Goo on 15 Mile Road, just west of Groesbeck Highway. The building was destroyed in the explosion. "The explosion definitely blew the building apart," township Fire Chief Tim Duncan said early Tuesday. "The area around it was like a war zone, there was so much debris from the explosion."

Police said a 19-year-old Clinton Township died Tuesday morning at a hospital after being struck by shrapnel. He apparently was observing the explosion scene at a 15 Mile car wash when he was hit, in what initially was thought to be the result of gunfire.

"That was due to the chaos of the scene," said Police Chief Dina Caringi. "We had projectiles falling from different directions and the loud explosions so it was determined to be a gunshot would before we found it wasn't gunfire."

The teen's name was not released.

A veteran township firefighter was also injured by the shrapnel, officials said.

Police issued a news release on what led to multiple fire

and police agencies assisting at the scene, centered at Select Distributors, which police is owned by the same organization that owns Goo.

The company sells vaping materials, novelties, electronics and other merchandise to discount and convenience stores. Fire officials say it also supplied gas canisters for the local vaping industry for vape pens, along with other products.

It's not yet known what started the fire.

According to the fire chief, four employees were inside the shop working on filling online orders when they heard "popping sounds" and evacuated the building minutes before it exploded. Investigators hope internal surveillance cameras give investigators a look at what happened from the inside.

About 50 firefighters from several Macomb County communities responded to the massive blast, which occurred around 8:50 p.m. Monday.

"Upon arrival, officers observed exploding materials flying in all directions from the building," an early morning release from the Clinton Township Police Department stated.

As the blaze raged, firefighters worked to contain it while police cordoned off the area.

"Personnel on scene established a perimeter of security and proceeded to evacuate area residents and businesses," police reported.

Hundreds of heavy football-sized metal canisters rained down on the roadways of 15 Mile and Groesbeck Highway, ripping holes in the

BLAST » PAGE 4



SUSAN SMILEY — THE MACOMB DAILY

Clinton Township Fire Chief Tim Duncan speaks at a March 5 press conference with Township Supervisor Robert Cannon and Macomb County Executive Mark Hackel.

## Officials respond: Warehouse activities may have been illegal

By Susan Smiley  
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Clinton Township Supervisor Robert Cannon said during a Tuesday morning press conference a business near 15 Mile Road and Groesbeck Highway that caught fire and exploded Monday night was illegally operating a warehouse.

"They should not have had any canisters of nitrous oxide on the premises at all," Cannon said. "It isn't that they had an excessive amount; they shouldn't have had any of those items there."

Clinton Township Fire Chief Tim Duncan confirmed the Select Distributors location was supposed to be the Goo retail vape and smoke shop only, not a distribution warehouse for the industry.

"The fact that it was a distribution center was unknown to us," Duncan said. "The vaping products they had were legal, but they should not have had any of the butane and nitrous oxide tanks at all."

The Select Distributors website describes the business as a wholesale supplier of novelty and smoke shop items and lists tanks of nitrous oxide, butane, torches and batteries among the many offerings available.

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Fire chief: explosion, response are expected to cost 'millions,' See Page 4

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