Research continues in MU building where explosion was

By MARA ROSE WILLIAMS

Researchers are back to work today inside the University of Missouri bio-chemistry building where four people were injured in an explosion on Monday.

University officials have declared Schweitzer Hall structurally sound and safe for researchers to continue work in other parts of the building.

The bio-chemistry lab where the Monday afternoon explosion blew out 17 windows was destroyed. An adjacent lab sustained major damage. Crews from MU Campus Facilities and Environmental Health and Safety assessed the structural damage and today are cleaning the laboratories. A university investigation is continuing.

The four people injured, none critically, included a graduate student, a research scientist and two post-doctoral fellows. Their names were not being released. One of them took the brunt of the explosion, suffering impact to the face and chest along with burns, said Columbia Fire Department officials who responded Monday to the explosion and extinguished a small fire in the lab.

That most seriously injured person was admitted to University Hospital and remained in good condition.

Fire officials said on Monday that the explosion occurred during a research experiment where hydrogen was mixed with nitrogen.

But university officials said today that what caused the explosion has not been determined.

"An investigation is university standard operating procedure in situations such as this and that is what we are doing now," said Mary Jo Banken, MU spokeswoman.

Chancellor Brady Deaton expressed concerned for the four injured and "all affected by this incident. One of our campus priorities is the safety of our faculty, staff and students."

Banken said the university has very strict protocols for conducting research and has a compliance office that deals almost solely with making sure researchers adhere to the safety protocols.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

UPDATE: MU researchers allowed to re-enter Schweitzer Hall after Monday explosion

By Nicholas Jain
June 29, 2010 | 6:42 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — After the Monday explosion of lab equipment in MU's Schweitzer Hall, the Columbia Fire Department and MU News Bureau are not releasing the names of the four victims, one of whom sustained injuries previously listed as life threatening.

Similar explosions have occurred at other universities, but the cause of this incident is not known.

The explosion occurred in Schweitzer Hall, Room 211, and damage spread to Room 212 as well. The lab belongs to MU biochemistry professor Judy Wall, MU spokesman Christian Basi said.

Wall declined to comment on the incident and wouldn't detail the experiments conducted or gas mixtures used at the time of the explosion. Wall's lab was used for experiments with bacteria.

As of Tuesday afternoon, according to an MU news release, cleanup was under way by MU campus facilities and environmental health and safety crews.

Airgas employees were also on site Tuesday. Airgas Mid America, a gas distributor in Holts Summit, referred questions to Doug Sherman, director of marketing communications for Airgas. Sherman confirmed that Airgas did supply gas to the MU biochemistry department and that Airgas cylinders were in Wall's lab but did not know the specific gasses and mixtures supplied.
“All the cylinders were removed to be tested for structural integrity,” Sherman said. He said they are testing the cylinders to see if they can be used in the future.

MU researchers and employees working in Schweitzer Hall said they had been instructed to refer all questions to the MU News Bureau.

Researchers were allowed to go back to work Tuesday in MU's Schweitzer Hall a day after a lab explosion injured four people, one seriously.

One graduate student, two postdoctoral students and a lab technician were burned and received shrapnel and impact injuries in the incident. One remained in the hospital in "good" condition, a MU news release said.

The university said it would not be releasing the names of those involved in the incident. Basi cited the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, a federal law that governs the release of information about students and university personnel privacy policies when he refused to provide the names of the victims.

On Tuesday morning, Columbia Battalion Chief Steven Sapp said investigators were still looking into the possibility of technical failure and that the department might need to send the lab equipment to independent investigators for evaluation. He said that no "official report" existed as of 4 p.m. Tuesday and that there was no public record that contained the victims' names. The department withdrew a statement made Monday night that said human error led to the explosion, a conclusion Sapp called "premature." He blamed a mix-up at the department for the claim.

In a news release, Columbia Fire Capt. Eric Hartman said the explosion was caused by the ignition of hydrogen gas in an anaerobic hood — an oxygen-free chamber used for working with bacteria that can't survive in oxygen. A flammable combination of gases used for the device came into contact with an ignition source, the release said, resulting in an explosion. The source of the ignition remains unknown.
Hartman said the number of injuries was "certainly reduced" because of MU being on summer break, which meant fewer people working in the facility.

Explosions in anaerobic chambers are not unprecedented, according to a research paper written by Mike Cox of Anaerobe Systems in San Jose, Calif.

Cox — who previously experienced two small anaerobic chamber explosions — wrote that when a chamber is transitioning to an oxygen-free state, specific combinations of oxygen and hydrogen can become flammable, making an explosion possible if something ignites the gas. Cox said most textbooks recommend using 10 percent hydrogen, but explained that 5 percent is safer because after it is diluted with air it cannot explode.

"The root of the problem is having hydrogen in excess of 5 percent," Cox said. He said the chambers usually contain a catalyst that converts entering hydrogen and oxygen into water. He said that the catalyst can "get hot and cause ignition."

Smaller explosions have occurred at the University of Michigan and the University of Oklahoma in the past; no injuries were reported with either explosion.

After Monday's explosion, the fire alarm was triggered and the building's fire sprinklers activated, extinguishing most of the fire, according to a Columbia Fire Department release. The building was evacuated, and Hartman said the fire was contained in about 10 minutes. Fire crews then began working to ventilate chemicals. Seventeen windows were blown out in the third-floor explosion. The university is looking into whether additional precautions are necessary, the MU News Bureau release said.

"I'm concerned about those injured and all affected by this incident," MU Chancellor Brady Deaton said in the release. "One of our campus priorities is the safety of our faculty, staff and students."
An explosion Monday injured four people in a lab in Schweitzer Hall on the University of Missouri campus.

By JANENE SILVEY
Published June 28, 2010 at 3:07 p.m.
Updated June 29, 2010 at 1:40 p.m.

Cleanup efforts are under way in Schweitzer Hall on the University of Missouri campus, where a hydrogen explosion injured four people and shattered nearly 20 windows yesterday.

That's about all MU officials are saying at this point, as the investigation into the blast is ongoing, MU spokesman Christian Basi said.

The Columbia Fire Department responded at 2:20 p.m. to a report of a structure fire at 503 S. College Ave. When crews arrived, they discovered the explosion and extinguished a small fire, much of which had already been put out by an automatic sprinkler system.
“It looks like a bomb went off in the lab,” Columbia fire Capt. Eric Hartman said, quoting a firefighter exiting the building.

Those injured included a research scientist, two postdoctoral fellows and a graduate student. Three of them were released from University Hospital after being treated for minor to moderate injuries. The fourth person was taken to the hospital with life-threatening injuries but was listed in good condition in the hospital’s burn unit as of last night.

Early this morning, the MU News Bureau said it planned to release names of the victims, but Basi later said privacy laws prohibited the university from providing that information.

Details about the explosion are scarce and have changed since the initial reports. Hartman first told reporters that a 2,000-pound hydrogen tank had exploded, but investigation crews later found the tank intact.

Last night, the fire department issued a statement blaming the explosion on human error. During an experiment with bacteria in hydrogen-rich environments, lab personnel turned on the hydrogen supply to an anaerobic hood and, because they weren’t familiar with the warning systems, left the gas on, the fire department’s statement said. Once the gas reached an ignition source, it exploded, according to the news release.

This morning, though, the fire department said the information was not complete and that fire investigators have not concluded that human error was to blame.

“We’re trying to figure out what caused it,” Basi said.

The investigation should reveal the monetary amount of damage to the building, he said. Results also should highlight whether the university should make procedural or policy changes to prevent similar incidents in the future, he said.

The third-floor lab was assigned to Professor Judy Wall, who was across the hall in her office when the explosion occurred. This morning, Wall referred questions to the news bureau.

Schweitzer Hall is home to the Department of Biochemistry, which is part of the School of Medicine and the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources. The building has one classroom, located in the basement, which is not being used this summer. Basi said lab space elsewhere in the building is OK. Crews found the rest of the building to be structurally safe, and researchers and staff were allowed to access the building to resume work.

Reach Janese Silvey at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jsilvey@columbiatribune.com.
Schweitzer Hall deemed structurally sound

Research activities have resumed in Schweitzer Hall, as the Columbia Fire Department deemed it structurally sound following Monday afternoon’s explosion.

A crew from Campus Facilities and MU Environmental Health and Safety inspected the building following the blast and began cleanup of the laboratory.

“Upon inspection, crews deemed the rest of the building structurally safe and have allowed researchers and staff access to the building to resume work,” a news release stated.

Four were taken to University Hospital following the explosion. One remains in the hospital and is listed in “good” condition.

“I’m concerned about those injured and all affected by this incident,” MU Chancellor Brady Deaton said in the news release. “One of our campus priorities is the safety of our faculty, staff and students.”

MU officials said the laboratory will need to be completely rebuilt.

An investigation has been launched, to determine what, if any, actions need to be taken to prevent this situation from
Curators’ secretary to replace Russell

Tuesday, June 29, 2010

Kathy Miller, secretary of the University of Missouri System Board of Curators, has been named interim chief of staff for the system.

She replaces David Russell, who on Thursday becomes interim commissioner of the Missouri Department of Higher Education.

Miller had expected to retire Sept. 30 to spend more time with family.

She plans to stay in her new role through January.

As chief of staff, Miller will be the system’s custodian of records, coordinating requests under provisions of Missouri’s Open Meetings and Records Law.

Curators have hired Cindy Harmon to replace Miller as board secretary. Harmon is a business operations manager at Missouri Employers Mutual in Columbia and previously worked in the MU Development Office.
Is ‘Twilight’ Looking to ‘Eclipse’ the Ladies?

The vampire franchise is the house that women built—its two previous films netted $489 million on the strength of female attendance. But ‘Eclipse’ is now chasing boys.

Big-screen vampires, from hot as hell to ugly as sin. View the photo gallery.

Twilight is leaving you in the lurch, ladies—at least, that’s what new research is claiming. Ahead of Eclipse’s Wednesday release, a new study suggests the third film is suppressing the book’s romantic fervor in favor of action-packed battle scenes and, in the process, devaluing its female fans. Why? As the study puts it, because Hollywood “doesn’t confer cultural legitimacy on texts until they are embraced by men, not just women.”

Zing! That’s harsh—but does it hurt because it’s true? Consider: though Eclipse in its book form is chiefly about Bella’s romantic struggles, the movie is an action-packed CGI-fest about an army of oozing vampire terrorists poised to battle a werewolf-vampire alliance. According to the new book Bitten by Twilight: Culture, Media & the Vampire Franchise, a collection by three University of Missouri communications professors, the previous two movies were faithful to the romance-heavy content of the books. It includes analysis of the marketing campaigns for the three Twilight Saga films: whether the trailers and other materials emphasized action or romance, and whether those emphases matched up with the books. For Eclipse, they didn’t.

Viewing a trailer might not seem like heavy-hitting scientific inquiry—but the professors claim that marginalizing romance in Eclipse has implications beyond peeved fans. The books and the first two films have enjoyed tremendous, unforeseen success on the strength of voracious female audiences. But the holy grail of studio marketers is the “four-quadrant hit”: a movie that appeals to audiences both old and young, both male and female. Most summer franchises are built for boys (Transformers, Iron Man) with hopes that girls will tag along, and those geared toward women have been utterly ineffectual at sustaining interest to men (think Sex and the City 2). Twilight isn’t just in scant company—it’s virtually alone as a movie brand that ladies built. Despite that success, the attempt to lure male viewers is, the researchers say, just another reminder of how little Hollywood values women. “What we think is disappointing is that here is this chance: you have women and girls who are already totally into these books,” says Melissa Click, who teamed with Jennifer Stevens Aubrey and Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz on the collection. “And instead of really catering to them, you’re sort of marking your success by how many guys attend,” Click says, adding that this standard doesn’t go both ways: “People don’t report whether girls go to Transformers, because nobody cares if girls go see Transformers.”
There aren’t yet any metrics on whether an action-packed *Twilight* film means more men will attend, other than informal data collected by movie-ticket sites. By those measures, male attendance has very slightly perked up: whereas 96 percent of Fandango.com’s online respondents identified as female for *Twilight*’s November 2008 debut, that number dropped to 92 percent this month for *Eclipse*, according to the site. (*New Moon*, which opened in November 2009, clocked 93 percent.) “When the producers hired director David Slade—known for tough stuff like *30 Days of Night* and *Hard Candy*—it was clear they were going for an edgier *Twilight* picture,” says Harry Medved, spokesman for Fandango. “Word of mouth is spreading that it’s OK for guys to see this movie.” That doesn’t mean they’re going of their own accord, though—they might just be plus-ones. The site reports that *Eclipse*’s “date-night appeal” is up compared with the previous films. Only 11 percent (*Twilight*) and 20 percent (*New Moon*) of ticket buyers said they would attend with a date in the past, according to the site; now, more than a quarter of prospective attendees (around 28 percent) intend to go on dates, according to a survey of 1,000 *Eclipse* fans. (Summit Entertainment, the studio behind *Eclipse* and the two prior *Twilight Saga* films, had no comment.)

As for the movie itself, how hard is *Eclipse* trying to turn *Twilight* into a male-friendly action franchise? (Spoilers ahead!) The third of five installments is certainly edgier and more battle-scarred than its predecessors—it opens with an alleyway attack on a young guy, and much of the movie is concerned with gathering strength for an epic battle scene. The terroristic band of newborn vampires and their leader resemble *The Dark Knight*’s Joker and his cronies, and the violence (the murders of two children, for example) is more unsettling and less cartoony than in the previous films. Not that there’s not plenty of romance, too. Flower-studded meadows and florid poetry make appearances, as do some chaste, soundless kissing and an antique diamond ring, proffered in exchange for Bella’s hand in marriage. There’s also a halted, grandiose speech from Edward, who, after putting the kibosh on some dangerously racy necking, rattles off the merits of waiting until marriage. Sipping iced tea on the porch is invoked as a proxy for premarital sex. So in one way, at least, *Eclipse* is not at all action-packed.
MU honored for fundraising prowess

The University of Missouri has been honored for its ability to keep fundraising on track, despite a tough economy. The school was awarded the 2010 Overall Performance award for fund raising from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education.

MU completed its $1 billion campaign in November 2008. During the latter stages of the campaign, MU became the most productive fundraising team among Missouri’s public higher education institutions, according to the university.

MU’s alumni donor participation rate has increased from 10 percent to 17 percent in the past few years. David Housh, vice chancellor development and alumni relations, said MU donor participation is now comparative to the rate that private colleges and universities enjoy.
Online ticket brokers part of college sports

NO MENTION

Tuesday, June 29, 2010 | 9:35 p.m. CDT
BY ALAN SCHER ZAGIER/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LAWRENCE, Kan. (AP) — College sports fans searching for a coveted ticket to a sold-out game can bypass the shady guys hanging outside the stadiums and arenas. Just try your favorite school's website. Or go straight to the NCAA.

A scalping scheme at the University of Kansas has exposed the seamy side of the secondary ticket business, with five now-former athletic department employees and a consultant accused of keeping the profits from selling as much as $3 million worth of basketball and football tickets to brokers. A federal grand jury is reviewing the case.

The Kansas case is a rare black eye for an industry that has grown in both size but also legitimacy.

A 2008 Forrester Research report values the secondary ticket market for live entertainment — pro and college sports plus concerts — at $4.5 billion annually, or roughly 20 percent of the primary ticket business.

Other estimates peg the annual secondary market as high as $10 billion. Industry leaders say as many as 30 percent of concert and sporting event tickets wind up on the secondary market.

The industry has its own lobbying group, the National Association of Ticket Brokers. The trade association and other industry groups hold annual summits at Las Vegas casinos and the Waldorf Astoria hotel in New York. And its political influence has led to an across-the-board decline of state and local anti-scalping laws, as well as greater cultural acceptance of ticket resales.

The NCAA in 2007 enlisted the Razorgator online exchange service as its "official ticket and hospitality package provider" for the men's Final Four. The deal has since been extended to include the women's Final Four, the College World Series, Frozen Four hockey tournament and the remaining four rounds of March Madness.
That means ticket sellers and buyers — fans or professional brokers playing the market — can ply their trade online under the NCAA's seal of approval. Alumni whose school loses in the semifinals can pawn their championship game tickets at the Razorgator table inside the stadium.

Need tickets and a hotel room for the 2011 Final Four in Houston? A shade under $1,900 will get you an upper-level seat in Reliant Stadium, four nights at a nearby Marriott, a souvenir program and admission to a pre-game hospitality tent with food buffets and an open bar.

Greg Shaheen, an NCAA senior vice president, said the association was tired of watching secondary market ticket sellers profit off the NCAA's name and reputation. He said the partnership with Razorgator also allows the NCAA to limit ticket fraud.

"It acknowledges reality," Shaheen said. "Our goal is to provide a legitimate, safe, guaranteed means by which those transactions occur."

Razorgator charges sellers and buyers an administrative fee. Shaheen declined to disclose the specifics of the NCAA's multiyear contract with the company.

Individual schools are also increasingly turning to Web-driven ticket exchanges to complement box office sales.

Ticket reseller StubHub, a division of eBay, counts 13 schools among its officials partners, including Alabama, Louisville, Purdue, Stanford, USC and Wisconsin. Other schools team with industry giant Ticketmaster or provide their own programs, which sometimes are restricted to donors and season-ticket holders.

At the StubHub school sites, ticket holders can sell their extras or average Joes can buy the finest seats in the house. So Trojan fans eager to watch USC face Virginia in the Sept. 11 home opener can buy a seat inside the Los Angeles Coliseum for just $39. High-rollers looking for a 50-yard line perch for the late November game against Notre Dame can expect to pay $3,000.

StubHub also works with pro teams such as the Chicago Bears and Washington Wizards and has an exclusive deal with Major League Baseball. Ticketmaster is the NFL's official ticket exchange partner.
"Scalping is no longer a guy in a van or behind a hotel," said Mark Nagel, a University of South Carolina associate professor of sport and entertainment management. "It has become a 'legit' business."

Brendan Ross, Razorgator's president and chief executive officer, and other industry types preach a free enterprise mantra that considers sports and concert tickets a commodity, not a birthright.

Since season ticket holders assume a risk "conferred by the team" and "give their money as an obligation to the team before (they) know what the product is," there is no reason they should be prohibited from reselling those tickets, Ross said.

Internet sales also allow buyers and sellers to be exempt from anti-scalping laws in the few remaining states and localities where selling tickets at marked-up prices remains illegal.

Online secondary ticket brokers take a hands-off approach when it comes to the source of the tickets sold on their sites. In the Kansas case, school employees sold complimentary tickets and others intended for donors to ticket brokers in suburban Kansas City and Norman, Okla. An independent review paid for by the school did not determine how those tickets were sold once they were in the brokers' hands.

"We don't know how the tickets are obtained (by) our sellers, and we don't ask," said Chris Tsakalakis, president of StubHub and general manager of eBay's ticketing division. "The onus is on the seller to make sure they follow the law. The assumption here (at eBay) is that people are basically good."

Tsakalakis said that the Kansas incident shouldn't tarnish the reputation of ticket brokers, just as the misdeeds of crooked car dealer or a rogue government official wouldn't mean their entire professions were tainted.

Las Vegas ticket broker Ken Solky agrees. Yet he said the pressures on campus ticket managers to generate revenue for their schools could lead some to cut corners.

"You're in a position to (ensure) that there are butts in a seat," said Solky, president of his industry's national association. "If I'm doing my job right, and I'm in the athletics department, I'm going to do whatever I can to get fans into the arena."
Burn specialists offer safety tips for fireworks

By Kristi McCann
June 29, 2010 | 9:11 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — An estimated 7,000 Americans were treated for fireworks-related injuries in hospital emergency rooms in 2008, according to a University of Missouri Health Care news release.

More than half of those injuries were sustained by children and adults under the age of 20, the release said.

"Fireworks are especially dangerous for young children," Nicholas Meyer said in the release, a fellowship-trained burn surgeon at the George D. Peak Memorial Burn and Wound Center at University Hospital. "We care for far more children injured by fireworks than adults."

Meyer said metal sparklers are one of the most dangerous fireworks for children because they burn at temperatures of more than 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit, which often results in severe burns to the hands and arms.

With the Fourth of July quickly approaching, the University of Missouri Health Care System wants to inform Missouri residents on safety guidelines when lighting fireworks:

- Never give fireworks to children
- Read and follow all warnings and instructions
- At least one adult should supervise the use of fireworks
- Wear protective eye wear
- Only use fireworks outdoors
- Light fireworks on a smooth, flat surface away from houses, dry leaves and trees
- Light fireworks one at a time, and keep a safe distance away
- Use punk sticks to light fireworks
- Never have any part of your body over fireworks
• Never light fireworks in your hand
• Always have a water hose or bucket of water nearby

Meyer recommends to enjoy public demonstrations of fireworks, because they are run by professionally trained staff with experience in running fireworks displays.

To treat a fireworks burn injury, cool the burn with cool water, not ice or ice water. Clean the area and cover the burn. If the burn is larger than the size of a palm, if discomfort or pain is experienced in caring for the burn or if the burn occurs on the hands, feet or face, you can call University Hospital's George D. Peak Memorial burn and Wound Center at 573-882-2876.