

## Fire breaks out at refinery south of downtown

San Antonio Business Journal - by [W. Scott Bailey and James Aldridge](#)

A truck explosion sparked a major fire Wednesday morning in South San Antonio at a refinery complex owned by **AGE Refining**.

The explosion and fire prompted the evacuation of Brooks City-Base, a former Air Force base that has been redeveloped into a business park that includes both office and retail tenants.

Black plumes of smoke were visible across the city's skyline. The fire started just after 11 a.m. The company's refinery complex is located at 7811 S. Presa St., just south of downtown. Neighbors are being evacuated from their homes.

AGE manufactures, refines and markets jet fuel, diesel, solvents and other specialized fuel. It supplies fuel to the U.S. Department of Defense. It recently won an \$84 million contract with the Defense Energy Support Center two weeks ago. The company filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection earlier this year.

"The immediate cause of the fire appears to have been an explosion on one of the trucks loading a light hydrocarbon from the AGE loading rack," says Phil Goodman, director of operations for AGE.

None of the storage tanks and refining processing units were damaged in the fire. The black plume of smoke coming from the refinery was from the burning of finished hydrocarbon products.

Company officials confirmed late Wednesday that the driver of the truck was injured in the blast. All other AGE and on-site personnel are safe and have been accounted for, according to AGE.

"We are grateful at this time that no fatalities occurred. We are working in cooperation with local fire and police officials and appreciate their service during this critical time," says Glen Gonzalez, CEO and owner of the refining company.

Cindy Taylor, president of the **South San Antonio Chamber of Commerce**, saw what she believes was the initial burst of smoke from the refinery at roughly 11:25 a.m. She happened to be in her vehicle when the fire started and saw the smoke in her rear-view mirror.

The South Chamber is located at Brooks City-Base, which is not far from the refinery.

"Brooks City-Base has been evacuated," Taylor told the Business Journal this afternoon.

Donald Jakeway, president and CEO of the **Brooks Development Authority** (BDA), says he heard another blast shortly before 1 p.m. He says officials are evacuating an area within a one- to two-mile radius of the refinery. The Brooks Development Authority is the agency responsible for redeveloping the former Air Force base. Jakeway confirms the authority has evacuated the entire Brooks City-Base campus, with the exception of roughly 10 personnel who have remained on site.

Jakeway, who is among the 10 personnel remaining at the campus, says he is uncertain when the evacuation might be lifted.

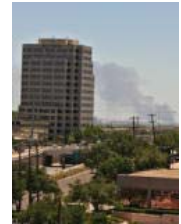
"We have battened down the hatches," he says.

The City of San Antonio and Bexar County operate an emergency operations center that houses communication, coordination, command and control elements essential for the response to catastrophic events. That center is located at Brooks City-Base.

City officials could not immediately be reached for comment. Highlands High School has been set up as an emergency shelter for families who have been asked to evacuate the area. The San Antonio area chapter of the American Red Cross will help families as needed.

AGE Refining is now the third San Antonio-based company to suffer a fire at one of its refineries within the last month.

Last month, four people were killed in a fire at a refinery located near Seattle that is owned by **Tesoro Corp.** (NYSE: TSO). Last week, a fire broke out at a refinery in downtown Memphis that is owned by **Valero Energy Corp.** (NYSE: VLO).



Smoke plumes from the fire at AGE Refining are visible for miles throughout the city.

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