



## Chemical explosion at U injures two

**Mary Jane Smetanka**

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An explosion that injured two graduate students at the University of Minnesota on Tuesday sent water from a damaged sprinkler cascading through classrooms. At least part of the building will be closed into today.

Amundson Hall, at 421 Washington Av. SE., was evacuated and closed after the accident occurred about 10 a.m. in a chemical engineering lab on the third floor.

The injured doctoral students were working with a small beaker of tetrahydrofuran, a solvent, when a runaway chemical reaction caused a flash explosion, said Amy Phenix, a university spokeswoman. Other people in the room were not hurt.

Both students walked to the campus health center about a block away. Eric Cochran suffered "significant" chemical burns, said Kristi Rollwagen, a spokeswoman for the Minneapolis Fire Department. He was taken to Hennepin County Medical Center in downtown Minneapolis, where he was in satisfactory condition Tuesday afternoon. The other student, Thomas Epps, had minor injuries and was treated and released by the campus health center.

The small blast was fully contained by the fume hood above the lab workspace, Phenix said, but the fire set off the sprinkler system and something knocked a sprinkler head off a pipe in the laboratory's ceiling. Water poured through the building for about an hour and nine classrooms that seat about 530 students were affected.

No damage estimate was immediately available. The east half of the building will reopen today, but the west side will remain closed until cleanup is finished, Phenix said. Students who have classes in the building should check the university's Web site at <http://www.classroom.umn.edu> to see where their classes are relocated.

Washington Avenue was blocked by Minneapolis fire trucks and ambulances for about an hour. Although officials initially were worried that hazardous materials may have leaked during the accident, Phenix said that did not happen.

Amundson Hall is the home of chemical engineering and materials science and contains offices and labs for that department and classrooms used by many other departments.

Nancy Lape, a graduate student who said she had worked in the building for three years, said students receive extensive training before they can work in the third-floor laboratories.

Tetrahydrofuran is a colorless liquid described as highly flammable in safety guidelines compiled by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. It may become explosive when exposed to air.

-- *Staff writer Pam Louwagie contributed to this report.*

-- *Mary Jane Smetanka is at [smetan@startribune.com](mailto:smetan@startribune.com).*

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