

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Humongous Fire at East Jordan Plastics

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East Jordan Plastics was the top news story in South Haven, Michigan, Friday, September 25, when a fire broke out around 3:45 p.m. in an outdoor plastics storage area. The area was quickly evacuated and no injuries were reported.

The fire, fueled by tons of plastic pots awaiting recycling, grew so big and so hot, it took 17 emergency response departments 14 hours and 2 million gallons of water to extinguish. You could even see the smoke plume from across Lake Michigan in Chicago. South

Haven Fire Chief Brandon Hinz said that in his nearly 30 years of service, he'd never fought a fire for that long.

Nearby propane tanks made fighting the fire even more hazardous. At least one exploded. A main power line to the nearby city power substation was endangered by the fire, so it was deactivated, resulting in a citywide power outage. Power was restored by 10:30 p.m.

The power outage and massive smoke plume forced South Haven Public Schools to cancel their Homecoming parade and football game.

"Public schools officials postponed the football game due to the lack of power and out of concern for the public's well-being due to the amount of smoke emanating from the fire scene," said Tom Renner, photographer/media relations official with South Haven Area Emergency Services. "A huge disappointment for South Haven school students as it was their Homecoming—no pre-game Homecoming parade, no halftime band show."

East Jordan released this statement shortly after the fire:

On Friday, we experienced a substantial fire at our East Jordan Plastics facility in South Haven, Michigan. Our team quickly evacuated the facility and no injuries have been reported.

We are working closely with local authorities and emergency responders as they investigate the cause of the fire. We are grateful to the first responders who worked to protect our employees, our facility and the surrounding

community.

South Haven is an important part of who we are, and we know this fire has disrupted the lives of our neighbors, local businesses and the broader community. Our thoughts are with everyone who has been affected.

The safety of our employees and our community remains our highest priority.

You can see from the photos and the video <https://www.facebook.com/reel/1396767575423557> that the smoke plume was enormous. But authorities said the wind wasn't very strong, so most of the smoke column went up and then out, and the homes around the area were below the smoke plume.

"That was kind of a best-case scenario ... because we had plenty of fires before where, if it's windy, it'll be blowing back toward everybody on the scene, all the neighboring houses, communities," Chief Hinz said. "With a fire that big, that would have been mass, mass evacuations."

A City of South Haven press release said the city will work alongside the company and authoritative agencies to determine the cause of the fire, proper site remediation steps and environmental impact.

[Watch an excellent video](#) by Captain Pat Durham of the Troy Fire Department in Michigan about the East Jordan fire, the hazards of storing recycling material and the challenges of putting out a "pile fire" like this one. **GT**