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PLANT ACCIDENT: PORT NECHES

Ghost town fire blazes

Crews fight inferno that imposed holiday away from home on 50,000 people

Kim Brent / The Enterprise

Adam Adams with EPA Region 6 speaks about the emission and air quality monitoring in place and the levels measured during a press conference at the Holiday Inn on Walden Road Thursday.

By Jacob Dick

Thanksgiving came to an empty Port Neches on Thursday.

The streets were void of holiday traffic. No cars carried families to meals at the homes of relatives, and no shoppers were out trying to grab last-minute forgotten items for the holiday feast. One local gas station had signs posted advising customers it was closed but the gas pumps were still on to allow people to fuel up before leaving town.

The only signs of activity were officers from the Department of Public Safety posted on street corners to dissuade break-ins — and the plume of black smoke rising above the TPC Group chemical plant on the Texas 136 Spur.

By a Thursday afternoon update, company and public officials said the fire at the plant was still too unpredictable to lift the mandatory evacuation affecting about 50,000 people in four communities, but crews were getting closer to suppressing the blaze.

Jefferson County Judge Jeff Branick said city and county officials would meet Friday morning to review progress

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