Fire damages Gopher State Ethanol plant

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A firefighter was hospitalized after a fire at the Gopher State Ethanol plant in St. Paul Friday night.

He was listed in stable condition at Regions Hospital with shortness of breath, said Deputy Chief Timothy Verros.

The fire, the third since March 2002, started when a piece of insulation fell into a heated area, setting the roof on fire, Verros said.

About 60 firefighters worked the blaze by ripping parts of the roof off, Verros said. He estimated damage between $10,000 and $15,000.

The fire is the latest incident for the W. 7th Street plant. Last week, a Ramsey County judge delayed his ruling in a public-nuisance case brought by the city against the plant to take its much-criticized odor out of its emissions or shut down. Residents have complained about noise and odor since Minnesota Brewing started producing ethanol in April 2000.

"Well, I think this is an ongoing reaffirmation that a plant like that doesn't belong in a residential neighborhood," said City Council Member Chris Coleman. The plant is in his ward.

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