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FIRE

## Fire burns former paper mill in Greenwich

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GREENWICH — Fire officials are still investigating the cause of a three-alarm blaze early Sunday morning that destroyed a former paper mill in Middle Falls.

Just after 2 a.m., State Police troopers spotted the fire at the former Stevens & Thompson Paper Mill facility on county Route 53 and called

it in, according to Middle Falls Fire Chief Dennis McDonald.

“The flames were visible from about a half-mile away,” he said.

McDonald arrived about 5 minutes later and requested additional manpower. About 50 firefighters from the Middle Falls, Greenwich, Victory Mills, Schuylerville, Easton, Hudson Falls, Fort Edward and Cossayuna companies battled the fire for about 2 1/2 hours before it was brought under control, according to McDonald.

Getting access the structure proved difficult, as McDonald said one of the entrance driveways wasn’t plowed. They used another entrance instead. The firefighters used an exterior and aerial attack to fight the blaze, as McDonald said the structure was too unstable to send crews inside. Four walls had collapsed during the fire.

Crews were still putting out hot spots early Sunday afternoon and McDonald estimated they would remain at the scene for another four or five hours. Backhoes were being used to tear down the three-story brick structure.

There were no injuries, McDonald said.

The fire started in the front of the structure, according to McDonald. The cause is still being determined by Saratoga and Washington county fire investigators and the state Office for Fire Prevention and Control.

The mill, which has been closed since 2001, has been the target of burglars looking to steal metal and other scavengers in recent years.

It was also operated as American Tissue Mills of Greenwich, and was later identified as a Superfund site by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

In 2006, the EPA said it had completed removing chemicals, waste oil, asbestos insulation and other contaminated materials from the property.

The EPA said it was able to recycle or return to original suppliers almost 10,000 gallons of liquid chemicals and almost 3 tons of solid chemicals during the cleanup.

The agency was also able to ship more than 100 drums of chemical waste to disposal

sites. During the investigation, EPA officials discovered a small, industrial source of radioactive Krypton 87 in a piece of process machinery at the site.

The source was returned to its supplier, Honeywell Inc., in Arizona. The cost of the cleanup is estimated at \$340,000.

Stevens & Thompson was a maker of tissue paper since the late 1880s. The company filed for bankruptcy and ceased operations in September 2001. The mill was sold to a California company more than eight years ago, but nothing was done with it.