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Smoke darkens sun as firemen battle raging flames at Yorklyn.

Staff Photo by Bill Sneed

Near-\$1-million blaze wrecks Yorklyn plant

By CHARLES P. WILSON

Fire of undetermined origin raged through a gummed tape manufacturing plant along White Clay Creek at Yorklyn yesterday, destroying two buildings and causing damage estimated at nearly \$1 million.

Richard C. Lynch, state deputy fire marshal, said he had talked to Herbert B. Adelman, president of the Crowell Corp.

which owns the plant, and Adelman had told him the damage probably would exceed \$1 million.

Debris from a collapsed wall of one of the plant buildings still blocked off motor traffic on Route 32, from Snuff Mill Road to Nine Gate Road, early this morning. Lynch said another section of wall was threatening to collapse and would probably be torn down early this morning.

FIVE FIRE companies were called in the fire, while two others provided coverage for areas temporarily left without protection. The first alarm was sent in at 11:14 a.m. and a call for additional equipment came in at 11:30. There were no injuries.

Hockessin Fire Chief Fred M. Roser, one of the first men at the scene, said fire was "pouring out of every window" in the two buildings when firemen arrived.

Roser said employees who were in the plant when the fire began told him the buildings were completely involved in

flames 10 minutes after the first flames were spotted there.

ALTHOUGH HE said he could not be sure how the fire started, Roser said there were indications it began in a machine used to dry glue onto tape. Then, he said, the fire probably raced through the buildings' ventilating system.

Sparks from the blazing buildings ignited nearby woods and for a while residents in the area feared for their homes. Firemen, however, were able to put out the field fires before they did any property damage.

Donald Blevins of Yorklyn, a foreman at the plant, said he was one of the 35 employees working when the fire broke out about 11 in the structures, which were built in 1902.

Firemen said the plant was loaded with rolls of paper used to make tape of the type used to seal cardboard boxes. They said there were also many barrels of glue, some of which exploded during the height of the fire.

The fire knocked out telephone service and power in the homes

immediately surrounding the plant, including Blevins' home.

Because of the danger of the brick building's collapsing, firemen said they would keep Route 32 closed until the walls fall or are pulled down.

At one time about 15 pieces of equipment were involved in the fire-fighting. In addition to Hockessin, the Newark, Five Points, Talleyville and Cranston Heights Fire Co.s were at the scene. The Elsmere and Wilmington Manor companies provided the standby coverage.

WHILE SOME men and equipment of the Talleyville Fire Co. was battling the Yorklyn blaze, other units of the company responded to a fire at 3:32 p.m. in a house at 2110 Naaman's Road, which caused \$5,000 damage.

The fire was started, according to firemen, by a short circuit in a lamp in the kitchen of a part of the house occupied by Robert Lennart. The house is owned by Alva Wimmer, who lives in another part of it, firemen said.