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Monsanto Chemical's Leak in Illinois Sends Over 120 to Hospitals

SAUGET, Ill. (AP) – The second leak of a noxious chemical in 3½ months from a Monsanto Chemical Co. plant sent more than 120 people to hospitals. At least nine were admitted although none had serious injuries, hospital officials said.

Less than three gallons of phosphorous trichloride, a component of the herbicide Lasso, escaped into the air when a "rupture disk," designed to break when pressure built up in the tank, gave way Sunday morning, said a spokeswoman for the St. Louis-based Monsanto Co. unit.

The leak was plugged within five minutes, and no evacuation was ordered.

On April 17, 22 square blocks of neighboring East St. Louis were evacuated when about 250 gallons of the substance spilled during loading onto a railroad tank car.

Most people who went to hospitals Sunday were released after treatment for burning eyes, nausea, headaches, shortness of breath and dizziness.

"My chest was hurting and my eyes was watering and my throat was. . .dry and every time I breathed, it felt like my wind was cutting out," said Danny Cleggett, 22 years old, of East St. Louis. He said he was at his mother's home, about a mile from the plant, when fumes entered the house.

Mr. Cleggett was in good condition at Centreville Hospital, a nurse said.

Monsanto officials began an investigation immediately after the leak, the company spokeswoman said. She also said that, as in April, the company will pay medical expenses related to the spill.