



WEST HAVERSTRAW TEXTILE BUILDING FIRE

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH MAYOR D'AMELIO & FRED VIOHL, BUILDING & FIRE INSPECTOR

BY: Keith S. Shikowitz, Editor in Chief/Investigative Reporter



In the late hours of May 3, 2026, at approximately 11:30 pm, the textile factory at 29 Samsondale Avenue in West Haverstraw burst into flames. As of now authorities have not discovered a cause according to Fred Viohl, Village of West Haverstraw Building and Fire Inspector.



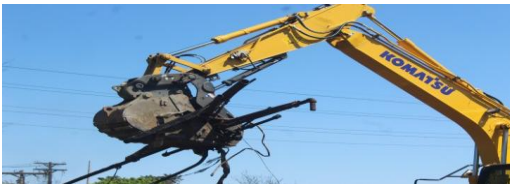
Photo Courtesy of LoHud

"I know the county BCI, came down, did an investigation, speaking with Fred Viohl, our Building & Fire Inspector, you can only guess that's accidentally done by maybe a homeless person, not sure, there's really nothing in there that you could just light a fire with, so you probably maybe somebody was in there trying to keep warm. I don't know. The only thing in there that was able to burn really is what did burn was the roof that where there was roof left. Many sections of the roof had already been falling down, but those debris were on the floor well." West Haverstraw Mayor Robert D'Amelio stated.

<https://youtu.be/tzMUUpf0NqRs>

He continued, "So it's roofing material either that was intact or on the ground for the most part."

"It was a big building, but, yeah, it's a big building, that piece of property is almost 3 acres, and I think 2.6 or 2.8 acres. So, and it was almost the whole property was kind of building back in the day." D'Amelio said



From the video that I saw that fire was huge. How many different companies did you guys have to get over there?

"We had Thiells, Haverstraw, Congers, West Haverstraw, Hillcrest, Monsey, and Stony Point. On top of that, what help us out a lot was they contacted Veolia to turn the pressure up on the water, which has allowed them to keep the water flow going." He listed.

<https://youtu.be/vfGkY5Lpw1E>

According to D'Amelio, apparently there were a number of problems with this particular parcel of property. over the years. They went out there and fenced it off and boarded it up. "At that time we weren't getting anywhere with the owners of the property. So, the Village did it. We did it ourselves and then we, we put a lien on it. The village has been made whole on their lien, you know, we got back every dime that we put into it."

So, somebody said to me that they, they thought maybe somebody did it to, so they could buy the property at a cheaper price.

Yeah, I don't know about that.

Look, I'm just telling you what, what I'm hearing.

That sounds like a crazy, yeah, I don't know.

Just finding the owner and getting him to respond was a lot of work. So, how long did it take the firefighters to get that fire extinguished?

"Completely full? I don't know, 11 o'clock today, 10 o'clock today. So, what they did was they got basically the fire out, under control and out. There were still many pockets of fire. But we couldn't get it because they didn't want to go in the building because the walls were compromised.



So, we got an excavator. Fred Viohl called a couple people up this morning to see if we can get a machine up here quickly. One guy responded immediately, and I would say that I was back here at 8:30, to do a robocall. So, I would say that contractor was up there by 7, 7:30 a.m. knocking the walls down so that the firefighters can go in knowing the walls are already on the ground as opposed to trying to fight a fire and put out these little pockets. The pockets were all over, Fred the Building Inspector wanted the walls down, & that's what we did."

He added that by 8 or 8:15 a.m., Chief Millaro called back in West Haverstraw, he believe New City, maybe Congers, and they set up another 3 or 4 aerials again and drenched everything down, water, and then even some guys went in on the, on the ground and put it out. He thinks he got called by 11 saying, "We're done, we're out." It took about 12 - 13 hours to get the whole thing finally.

The man who was able to answer more of the questions was Viohl

https://youtu.be/e72_-MNv40E

There were several fire departments. We were just over there. The front loader was cleaning up all the pipes and stuff. I was like, wow, it was amazing. Big building and the debris is just unbelievable. I mean, the debris is all the way out over by the street there. I saw some, you know, pieces of charred wood.



"Yeah, they brought that all out. That was inside the building that they made access for the fire department to get in and get some water into the hot spots and, they were saying that they upped the pressure, so they had more water to be able to put on it. They did the, upgrade the pressure to keep it from sucking the other, Hydrants and locations for the other area that started to run dry, so it worked out good. The fire departments did a great job. There were about 75, 85 firefighters in that area." Viohl said.

That building took up most of the three acres of the property. Why was that building abandoned anyway?

"What, I couldn't tell you why it was abandoned, but it's probably been abandoned since 2002. It used to be a uniform textile type building. I think it went out of business years ago and there was no business just fell apart. It's been vacant ever since." He explained.

Was there anything in there besides just the roof and the wood and stuff, or no textiles or anything.

"There were no contents in there. It was vacant. It's been vacant for years seems strange that a fire would start like that without somebody doing something. Somebody had to do something, you know, it's, it's not as if we had a lightning strike and it, and it, started a fire. He did say again that it is being investigated.