Affiliated Foods Looks To Future
As Cause Of Blaze Discovered

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A short in an electrical panel caused the fire that destroyed more than 300 square feet of warehouse space and office area of Affiliated Foods, Inc., in Broussard last week, a company spokesman said.

The determination came after several days of investigation by the state fire marshall's office, with the aid of the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

Edward "Sonny" Taunton, Affiliated's president and general manager, said board members will meet this afternoon to discuss whether the company will rebuild on site or relocate.

He said there is no final word yet on the amount of damage. One estimate last week was at $25 million.

Repercussions

The fire which burned out of control for hours Tuesday, and smoldered for two more days, left more than 100 persons unemployed and kept hundreds away from their homes for several days.

As of today, 130 Affiliated employees are out of work due to the fire. Taunton said. He said 118 workers received hourly pay and 12 were on salary.

The food distribution company, which serves about 175 grocery stores in Louisiana, formerly employed 322 persons.

Residents of a nearby trailer park, which had to be evacuated due to heavy smoke and the possibility of an explosion, were able to return home Saturday.

Supplies Delivered

"To my knowledge there has been no problem with the residents," Taunton said. "The only one that ever occurred would have been a communication problem," he said.

The residents were provided emergency lodging the night of the fire at Broussard Elementary School, but for the remainder of the time were not guaranteed lodging.

Affiliated did provide some of the residents hotel lodging during the evacuation period.

Taunton said the food cooperative's member stores have been receiving groceries from suppliers located in Texas, Mississippi and other areas of Louisiana. He noted that Affiliated is still delivering perishable goods.

The warehouse containing meats and dairy products, which is adjacent to where the fire occurred, was not damaged.

Affiliated has temporarily opened an office in the Tara Building at 1602 Pinhook, he said.