Crowley resident Fred Findling braves a heavy downpour to watch a natural gas well blowout Wednesday.

**Well blows out; no injuries reported**

CROWLEY (AP) — A natural gas well blew out during drilling Wednesday, sending a stream of salt water and gas spewing wildly, but it did not catch fire and no injuries were reported.

The Acadia Parish Sheriff's Office evacuated one family from a nearby home and sealed off the neighborhood in case of fire. City schools were closed early.

School Superintendent Bobby Stringer said Crowley Middle School would be closed Thursday because it is 300 to 400 yards from the well.

Emergency teams stood by and wild-well experts were called from Texas, but officials said they hoped the well would clog up and snuff itself out naturally. It had not late Wednesday.

"The company told us to keep the people away from that area," said Sgt. Albert Boullion. "They're hoping it'll sand itself out.

"All the schools were evacuated," Boullion said. "The only reason we had to evacuate the schools was that we have one in that area, and we can't evacuate one without evacuating them all because of the bus system.

The blowout came during heavy rains, which officials said helped reduce the chance of fire. Stiff west winds blew the spewing gas away from most residences.

Witnesses said the gas blew through the side of the well and spewed out a hose which flapped wildly under the intense pressure. The well is located in a large pasture, about 200 yards away from the nearest house.

The well, owned by Apache Oil of Houston, was being worked by O'Connor Drilling, also of Houston, on a site near the city limits between Interstate 10 and La. 18. Drilling started last week, and the blowout came when the well reached a depth of 11,000 feet, officials said.

The crew reported that the kelly hose, which carries drilling mud from a pump to the drilling pipe, burst after a buildup of back pressure, said Sgt. Jim LaPoint of the Acadia Parish Sheriff's Office.

Wild-well fighters from Houston were at the site and said they may let the well blow through the night before trying to close it down.