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Re: Bernat Mill fire

On July 21, 2007 a devastating fire swept through Bernat Mill, a 400,000 square foot mixed use business complex in Uxbridge, Massachusetts, once the third largest yarn mill in the U.S. Although 400 firefighters from 66 communities responded to the blaze, the complex was completely destroyed. The property and business losses suffered by 65 businesses following the fire were many millions of dollars. Rapperport Associates was engaged by the insurance company of one of the tenants to conduct a fire investigation.

Approximately 6,000 gallons of mineral oil was delivered to the facility on July 19, 2007, two days before the fire, and an additional 75 drums (55 gallons each) and 6,000 to 8,000 gallons of mineral oil was also present at the time of the fire. A license was required for storage of more than 10,000 gallons of Class IIIB liquids (defined as combustible liquids with a flash point above 200 °F). The total amount of mineral oil stored on site was between 18,000 and 20,000 gallons which would have required a permit. No permits had been issued by the Uxbridge Fire Department for the storage of any combustible or flammable liquids at that location.

It was determined that the control valve on zone #6 of the sprinkler system had been padlocked “closed” at the time of the fire. This zone protected businesses on the first, second and third floors including the area where the mineral oil was stored. No permit had been obtained for the shut-down of the fire protection valve.

Other National Fire Protection Association Standard and Massachusetts Building Code violations included lack of fire protection evaluations subsequent to renovations and lack of fire separation between use groups.

Had the fire protection system been properly updated as required and not been impaired, the sprinkler system likely could have controlled the incipient fire.

[Bernat Mill](#) fire (YouTube)
[Photos](#) (pbase)

















