

Courthouse evacuated Friday due to propane concerns

Contributed by Elizabeth Larson
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LAKEPORT – A strong odor of propane in the Lake County Courthouse on N. Forbes led to the building being evacuated for about a half hour Friday morning.

County personnel were evacuated from the building shortly before 10 a.m. Employees at the scene said the smell of propane was strongest on the third and fourth floors.

Responding to the scene were Lakeport and Kelseyville Fire Protection Districts, Lakeport Police and Lake County Sheriff's deputies.

Capt. Bob Holbrook of Lakeport Fire said by the time firefighters arrived on the scene county staff had identified the problem with the propane system and were working to fix it.

“We basically ventilated the building and checked for levels for flammability,” said Holbrook.

He said getting the building aired out took less than 30 minutes, and then staff were allowed to re-enter the building.

Dave Hendrick of the county's Facilities Maintenance Department explained that there was a leak in the control valve to the system's gas pilot, which heats the propane. That caused the gas smell, which was made worse when the system's exhaust, after it left the building, was drawn back through the system intake.

Hendrick added that no gas actually was in the intake or coming into the building.

He said he expected the problem would be fixed by the end of the day, and that it wasn't a big deal.

However, he added, “It's better to be safe than sorry.”

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