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Chemical Release at Wacker Plant in Charleston



Authorities lifted a shelter-in-place order Friday afternoon following a chemical release and fire at the Wacker Polysilicon Plant in Bradley County.

According to the Bradley County Office of Emergency Management, the order had been issued earlier in the day for residents and employees

in the area of the facility in Charleston after the incident was reported. An emergency alert urged people nearby to remain indoors while crews responded.

Stephen Fellner, site manager at the Wacker facility, said there were no injuries and no risk to the surrounding community.

Emergency response teams were able to contain the incident, according to company officials. During the response, nearby roadways including State Route 308 west of the interstate and State Route 2 east of the site were temporarily closed, and Walker Valley High School was closed as a precaution. Emergency personnel continued assessing the situation before the shelter-in-place order was lifted later in the afternoon. Officials said their priority during the response was ensuring the safety of employees, contractors, first responders and nearby residents.

Source: [News Channel 9/WTVC](#)

Community News You Can Use

- [MEDIC Regional Blood Center](#) will host a community blood drive **TODAY**, Tuesday, March 10, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Athens City Hall courtroom in Athens. Donors will receive a free T-shirt and a Texas Roadhouse coupon while supplies last. Organizers say every donation helps support patients in Athens and McMinn County. Appointments are encouraged, and participants can reserve a time [by scanning the QR code on the event flyer](#).
- The [McMinn Regional Humane Society](#) will host its first-ever [Spring Paw-looza](#) on Friday, March 20, from 3 to 7 p.m. in Athens. The free, family-friendly event will feature a bake sale, prizes, kid-friendly games, local vendors, and dogs and cats available for adoption, giving residents a chance to support local shelter pets while enjoying a fun afternoon with the community.

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Unattended Brush Fire Sparks Woods Blaze in Niota



Fire crews responded Friday afternoon to a structure and woods fire in the 700 block of County Road 279 in Niota.

When firefighters arrived, the structure was already on the ground and about one acre of nearby woods was burning. An excavator was also on the scene where crews had been tearing down an old house. Officials believe a small brush fire that had been left unattended may have spread, igniting the blaze.

Due to the intense heat and hilly terrain, AMR was called to assist firefighters at the scene.

Fire departments responding included the North McMinn Fire Department, Clearwater Volunteer Fire Department and Niota Rural Fire Department. No injuries were reported.

Officials remind residents not to leave fires unattended and note that burn permits are required until March 15.

Photo credit: David Prater, Niota Rural FD

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Tuesday, March 10, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

Virginia Motorcyclist Killed in I-75 Crash Near Sweetwater

A Virginia man died Friday morning following a motorcycle crash on Interstate 75 in Monroe County.

According to a preliminary report from the Tennessee Highway Patrol, Harvey Mulligan, 65, of Virginia, was traveling northbound on a Harley-Davidson motorcycle near the Sweetwater exit around 11:30 a.m. Friday. For unknown reasons, the motorcycle left the left side of the interstate, overturning and throwing the rider from the bike.

Mulligan was pronounced dead at the scene, authorities said. A helicopter from UT LIFESTAR was dispatched to the crash site.

The crash temporarily closed the northbound lanes of I-75 near mile marker 63 while emergency crews responded. The roadway has since reopened.

Officials with the Tennessee Department of Transportation initially reported the crash as involving multiple vehicles, but the Tennessee Highway Patrol continues to investigate the incident. *Source: [WBIR News](#)*

McMinn County Arrest Reports

March 8, 2026

Rasheed Wilkerson, 45 of Athens, Charged with Burglary, Bond \$30,000.

Tina Espy, 38 of Riceville, charged with simple possession, casual exchange in Hamilton County.

Jody Klein, 32 of Riceville, charged with failure to appear for simple possession casual exchange, Bond \$12,000.

Brandon Daffron, 25 of Sweetwater, charged with failure to appear for driving on a revoked license second offense.

Donald Rowland, 48 of Etowah, charged with schedule II meth for resale, schedule II fentanyl for resale, and drug paraphernalia.

Those accused are considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. Information gathered using public sources.

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Athens Police Identify Victim in Fatal Congress Parkway Crash



The Athens Police Department has identified the victim of a fatal crash that occurred Friday evening on Congress Parkway in Athens.

According to police, officers and emergency responders were called to the area of Congress Parkway near Southeast Bank on March 6 following a crash involving a fatality.

Authorities have identified the victim as Bradley L. Trent, 56, of the Riceville area. The circumstances leading up to the crash remain under investigation, and no additional details have been released at this time.

Athens Police Chief Fred K. Schultz said the department extends its sincere condolences to the family and loved ones affected by the tragic incident.

Source: [City of Athens PD](#)

UTC MobileMOC Clinic to Visit Etowah Senior Center



A mobile health clinic from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga will bring medical services to residents in Etowah this week.

The UTC MobileMOC will be at the Etowah Senior Center on Wednesday, March 11, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., offering a range of health services to the community. The mobile clinic provides sick visits, wellness exams, preventive screenings, and diagnostic testing when needed. Officials say treatment is available regardless of insurance status, helping make care more accessible to rural residents.

MobileMOC launched in 2025 to provide free primary care, screenings and chronic disease management to older adults and others in rural Southeast Tennessee who may face transportation or access challenges. The program also serves as a training opportunity for nursing students while expanding healthcare access in underserved communities. Residents interested in scheduling an appointment can call 423-425-1657.

Source: [Sue Walker, Etowah Senior Center](#)

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