

BREAKING: Private Christian Academy in Minneapolis Explodes

Two people were missing and nine were injured after a gas explosion tore through a Christian private school in Minneapolis on Wednesday, leveling a building, authorities said.

The Minneapolis fire department's assistant chief of administration, Bryan Tyner, told reporters at the scene there were early indications that a ruptured gas line may have led to the explosion and that it was caused by contractors working at the school.

Tramon Van Leer, 33, was in the gym at the Minnehaha Academy playing basketball with his stepdaughter and four other girls when they heard the blast.

After they ran outside to safety, Van Leer said he looked back and, "Wow, the whole section of the school is gone."

Dark smoke and a strong smell of gas hung over the area.

Nine adults were being treated at a local hospital, three of whom were in critical condition, officials said. It was not immediately clear if the missing were adults or children.

"We don't know if they're in the rubble or in the building," Tyner told reporters.

Officials at the school, attended by students from pre-K to 12th grade, could not immediately be reached for comment.

The academy confirmed on Facebook that there had been a gas leak and explosion at its Upper School.

The federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives said on Twitter that its agents, fire investigators and trained canines were at the site of the explosion.

“It is a good thing that it is summer time,” Tyner said. “Probably limited the amount of people in the building.”

Phillip Day, 41, said that he, his wife and their 17-year-old daughter, Chimali, had been at the school meeting with a counselor to discuss college options when the explosion occurred.

Day said that as they left a conference room, his daughter was blown back through the door by the force of the blast and his wife was scraped. {eoa}

© 2017 Thomson Reuters. All rights reserved.