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Staff and students were evacuated from the lab building at Okanagan College in Kelowna after smoke set off alarms. Asphalt roof repairs ignited some insulation, which sent smoke into the building.

Roof fire clears college building

By J.P. SQUIRE
The Daily Courier

The lab building at Okanagan College's KLO campus was evacuated at 2:45 p.m. Thursday after roofers applying asphalt accidentally started a small fire.

"They extinguished it themselves, but the smoke was drawn in by the HVAC (heating, ventilation, air-conditioning) unit on the roof and smoked up the second floor," said assistant fire chief Bryan Collier.

"So the fire department overhauled the situation to make sure there were no remaining hotspots and ventilated the building. They did remove some plywood to ensure that the fire didn't progress any further."

The department responded with two engine companies and a ladder company, 10 firefighters plus command personnel.

The three-storey building at the KLO campus has what is called an inverted roof, where the insulation is on the outside of the roof, said Allan Coyle, the

college's director of public affairs.

"Some of the hot asphalt caught the insulation on fire. They put it out right away and cut away the insulation, but, unfortunately, the fresh air intakes picked up the smoke."

About 60 students and staff standing outside the building were allowed back in about 4 p.m. Some staff just picked up their work and went to the Student Services Building next door and continued marking exams and doing other tasks, said Coyle.