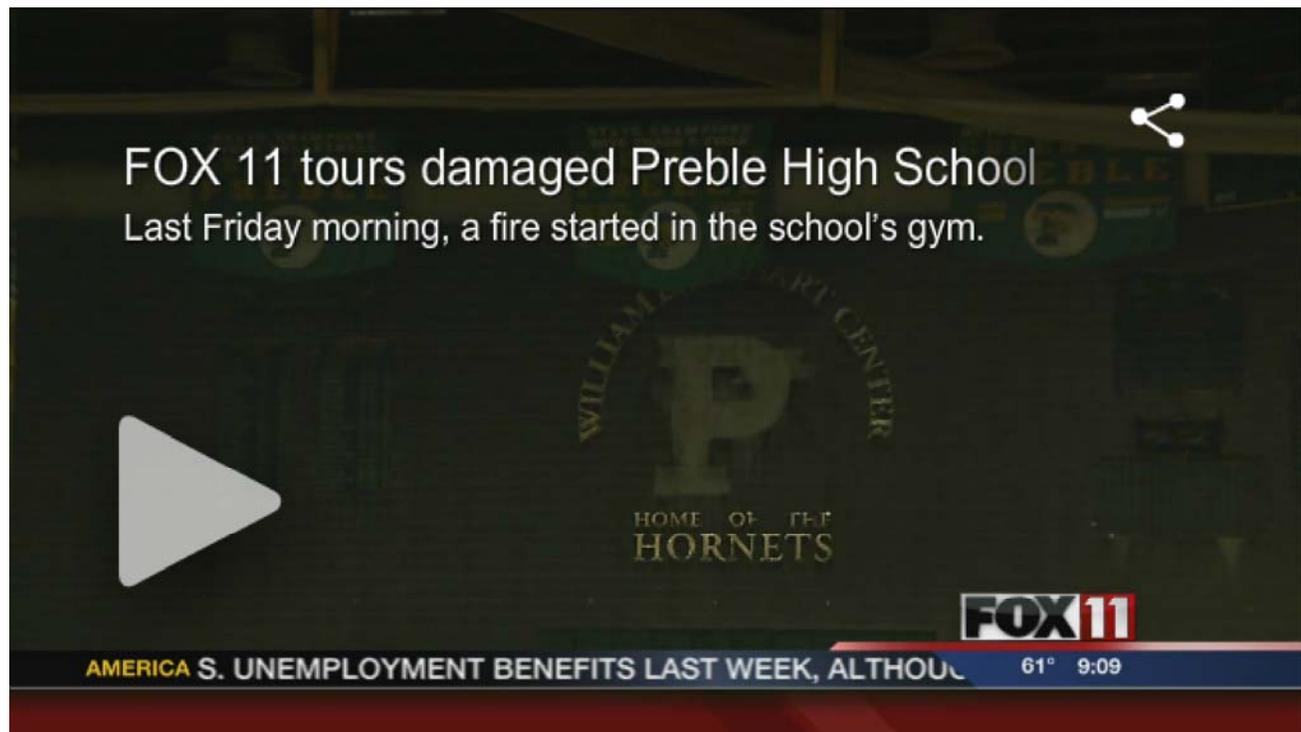




FOX 11 tours damaged Preble High School

By Andrew LaCombe

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GREEN BAY – For the first time since a fire last Friday, FOX 11’s cameras were allowed inside Green Bay’s Preble High School. The fire started in the school’s gym.

On Thursday, the front hallways of Preble looked like a school undergoing some routine summer maintenance. But closer to the gym and inside of it, the smell of smoke was very strong, and the damage looked much worse.

J. Murphy, the senior vice president of operations for Paul Davis Co., led the media tour.

“You can see where the bleachers are already damaged and falling off the walls,” said Murphy, while in the gym. “That’s where the fire started.”

Clean-up work has not yet begun in the gym. Banners are black, the track is melted and the gym floor is warped. Everything will be replaced, said Murphy.

“What really caused all of the soot to carry through the gymnasium, or the whole building, was the vinyl coating that was on the sound board that was at the top of the gymnasium,” he said.

Murphy said when the school re-opens, the gym will not be ready for students to use. The school does have a smaller gym that will be ready.

In other parts of the school work is already underway. Murphy said everything in the building will be addressed including all student lockers.

“We cleaned the inside of the lockers, the face of the lockers and then we tent them with plastic,” he said.

Murphy said the number of people working at Preble is increasing every day. He said by next Wednesday there will be 400 people working a day shift and 200 people working at night.

“The soot and the smoke that we can see is not a concern to us,” said Murphy. “It’s what we can’t see. So what we’ve done up to this point, is we’ve taken air sampling and we’ve taken what’s called swipe samples. And the hygienist has gone through the building numerous times and they’ll take the samples and they’ll get readings for us and tell us what kind of contamination is in there.”

Murphy said a new start date for Preble students can be determined once those samples come back. The district has already said classes will not start as scheduled on September 2.

Insurance will likely cover most, if not all, of the cleaning and replacement costs.

Investigators said the fire was caused by spontaneous combustion. They said it could have been prevented if district employees had cleaned up correctly after resurfacing the gym’s wood floor.

Many school events are still taking place despite the uncertainty about the academic schedule.

The football team held its annual ‘Meet the Team’ night Thursday evening at the football stadium next to Preble.

Alex Wood, a senior cornerback at Preble, said his team has just carried on following the fire.

“I think that’s important,” Wood said about Thursday’s event. “It gets our whole team, the whole program, hyped up and ready to go for the season. And then the fire, I’m not too concerned about the fire. We’re trying to just get over the fire and not think about it anymore.”

Wood said the fire had little impact on his team's practices.

"The only thing that really affected us is we didn't have our pads for a couple practices, but we have our pads back and we've been hitting each other around all week, so we're ready to go," he said.

However, some parents have questions about how practices would work if school days are lengthened. Julie Lindsley's daughter is a freshman on the dance team.

"My daughter practices from 3:30 to 6:00, so I mean, they would have to push it back a little bit," said Lindsley. "It would be okay. But the sports teams that have to travel to away games and stuff. That would probably be an issue."