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Press Release

On Thursday 8/20/2026 the Mattoon Fire Department was dispatched to 19th and Western at 13:02 hours for a building collapse. Units were on scene as the dispatch came in, as we heard the collapse from the station located across the street and responded prior to the dispatch. On arrival it was found that a partial building housing a smoke shop had collapsed. Crews searched the entire building to ensure all occupants were out of the other businesses that were housed in this building. A total of 8 businesses occupied the building, with the smoke shop and Little Caesars receiving most of the damage. A gas leak was found under the Southeast corner of the building. **THERE WAS NO EXPLOSION** within this building that precipitated the collapse. The collapse of the building broke a gas line coming into the building. Ameren gas and electric were immediately notified.

Crews were able to quickly account for all occupants of the building within all the businesses and ensure that everyone had safely evacuated. The technical rescue team was called in; this team is made up of members of area departments including Mattoon and Charleston that have received specialized technical rescue training in several disciplines including structural collapse. The trailer with the specialized tools and equipment which is housed in Charleston responded to the scene.

While questioning employees who were in the building when it collapsed, it was determined that all occupants had safely evacuated prior to the collapse as they heard the building making noises and observed drywall falling from the walls and a window breaking. They began evacuating prior to the collapse. Video surveillance also assisted with making sure that there was nobody on the sidewalk, in the drive-through lane of Little Caesars, or around the building at the time of the collapse.

With this information, as command felt that there was no immediate life safety risk, the focus became in securing the gas leak. Ameren was able to quickly shut the gas off to the building. The break was in a location that required that a valve in the street be dug up to properly resolve the leak. All search operations within the collapse area of the building were put on hold until all Ameren workers were able to mitigate the leak and move to a safe distance.

Once Ameren resolved the gas leak, search operations began while using excavators to assist in this process. Crews guided these excavators to remove some debris to make a safer area where they could utilize search cameras to ensure that there were no victims within the smoke shop or the collapsed area.

The cause of the collapse is still currently under investigation. A structural engineer will be contacted to ensure that the building will be safe prior to allowing entry into the remaining businesses within this building.

Businesses that operate within this building are: The Smoke Shop, Little Caesars, CK Nails, Hair Force 1, Armstrong Grooming, Paws, Healing Touch, and JWP Enterprises.

The Mattoon Fire Department would like to thank the following agencies and community members that assisted during this event; Coles/Moultrie 911 (CECOM), Charleston Fire Department, Mattoon Police Department, Mattoon Public Works, City of Mattoon Administration staff, Ameren Gas and Electric, Curry Construction, 1st Class Wrecker (Dustin Salmons), Walmart (donated sub sandwiches), Rob Ratliff (brought the sub sandwiches and water to responders), Dylan Booker who bought pizza for responders, Cari Shepherd with the Salvation Army, and KC Summers. We greatly apologize if we missed someone as this was not intentional. We greatly appreciate our community and all the assistance that they offer us throughout the year.

Moving Forward

- Western Avenue from 19th to 20th street will remain closed.
- The east bound lane of Prairie from 19th to 20th will remain closed.
- The City will be working with the property owner to secure a structural engineer to inspect the building prior to allowing the businesses that operate within this building to open.
- The City will work with the structural engineer to try and determine the cause of the collapse.
- All other businesses in the immediate area outside of the collapse building will remain open.
- Follow the City of Mattoon on social media for updates on the street closures and information moving forward.

At 14:30 hours today 8/21/2026 we will be providing an update to media at City Hall located at 208 N. 19th St. Mattoon IL 61938 for any agencies interested in this update.

Jeff Hilligoss
Fire Chief