

May 22 2016 - 12:00PM

Lambton factory burns in suspicious fire

- **Carrie Fellner**

The work of firefighters has been praised after they managed to prevent flammable material from exploding at the scene of a factory fire in Lambton.

The fire, which gutted the Air View Aluminium factory on Cockburn Lane, is being treated as suspicious by police.

About 40 people in the area self-evacuated after the blaze broke out at about 10.50am on Saturday.

Crews found the factory fully engulfed by fire, and had to work quickly to remove a forklift inside containing an LPG cylinder and several drums of ethanol.

Fire and Rescue NSW Superintendent Greg Rankin said if the material had exploded there could have been severe consequences.

“It would have been a significantly bigger fire and may have threatened surrounding properties,” he said.

About 20 firefighters took an hour-and-a-half to extinguish the blaze, which occurred directly across from where the new Lambton fire station is being constructed.

An office building next to the factory, also belonging to the business, was saved.

Part-owner Tony Drinnan said the business, which employs about 30 people, would remain operational despite suffering heavy losses.

“That shed was pretty much for storage, fabrication and glass cutting,” he said. “There was a great loss of machinery and a loss of projects that were ready to go out.

“But we’ll be able to keep our heads above water.”

Police are yet to determine a cause of the fire but are treating it as suspicious.

Mr Drinnan said they were following up several lines of inquiry.

“They’re look at the fact someone had dumped some furniture behind the shed in a laneway, someone may have torched that,” he said.

“But that’s pure speculation.”