



TOWN OF THOMASTON
TOWN MANAGER
13 VALLEY STREET
THOMASTON, MAINE 04861
TEL: (207) 354-6107

February 3, 2025

RE: Support for LD 185- *An Act to Expand Opportunities to Invest Municipal Tax Increment Financing Revenues*

Dear Taxation Committee,

On behalf of the Town of Thomaston, I urge your support for LD 185, which would allow municipalities to use Tax Increment Financing (TIF) revenues for public safety building construction.

Like many Maine communities, our Fire and EMS First Responders operate from an outdated 1956 station that no longer meets modern emergency service needs. Increasing emergency calls now require 24/7 shifts, yet our EMS personnel lack proper sleeping facilities, violating OSHA standards. New federal safety regulations will soon require decontamination areas, sprinkler systems, and emission controls—updates our current station cannot accommodate. Additionally, our larger fire apparatus barely fit within existing bays, and the inadequate apron poses safety concerns.

To address these challenges, the Thomaston Select Board and Budget Committee unanimously recommended a \$3.5 million bond proposal for a new Fire and EMS station, contingent on securing an equal match in congressional discretionary spending (CDS) funds. If approved, this \$7 million project would increase our budget by 2.3%—or nearly 2 tax mills—posing a significant financial strain on our small town. Unfortunately, no alternative grant funding sources exist beyond loan programs through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), underscoring the critical need for LD 185.

Thomaston currently has a TIF agreement with Dragon Cement Products, which has previously funded fire department equipment, including air packs and a fire truck. However, current statutes cap public safety expenditures at 15% of TIF funds and prohibit their use for public safety building construction. Expanding TIF eligibility to include these costs would provide crucial relief for municipalities like ours.

Some may argue that TIF funds should be reserved for direct economic development. However, no business or resident would choose a community without reliable emergency services. In 2019, our Fire Department and neighboring departments responded to a major fuel fire at Dragon Cement, preventing a catastrophe that could have shut down the plant, caused extensive environmental damage, and left over 60 employees jobless. As a key supplier to Maine's transportation and construction industries, Dragon Cement's continued operation is essential to the regional economy. Strong emergency services are not just a public necessity—they are an economic imperative.

Please support LD 185 and help ensure municipalities have the financial flexibility to provide essential public safety infrastructure. Without CDS funds, TIF revenues are our only viable alternative to mitigate the financial burden on taxpayers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kara George". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Kara George
Town Manager

Thomaston cement plant badly damaged in fire

[pressherald.com/2019/03/27/thomaston-cement-plant-badly-damaged-in-fire](https://www.pressherald.com/2019/03/27/thomaston-cement-plant-badly-damaged-in-fire)

March 27, 2019



THOMASTON — The investigation into a major fire at the Dragon Products cement plant is expected to take a long time, Thomaston Fire Chief Mikial Mazzeo said Wednesday morning, March 27.

Mazzeo said there was heavy damage to the three-story building that was ablaze when the first crews arrived Tuesday night. The fire was the most serious one at the cement plant in his more than 30 years with the department, the chief said.

There were no injuries.

An employee reported finding a large leak or spill of number 2 fuel oil on the floor which was flowing into a below grade mechanical area in the core building, Mazzeo said. In this area the fuel oil ignited spreading back to the leak origin and ultimately throughout the building, the chief said. The fire was stopped just as it was entering a laboratory and control room areas.

Rewind 10 seconds

Move forward 10 seconds

Unmute

0:02

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0:09

Our View: Less reporting on housing, more housingOur View: Less reporting on housing, more housing

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That section of the building was largely spared from fire damage, Mazzeo said.

The call came in at 7:28 p.m. He estimated more than 75 firefighters responded to the fire, which took more than two hours to extinguish.

Crews from Thomaston, Rockland, St. George, Rockport, South Thomaston, Cushing, Union, Owls Head, Friendship, Warren and Waldoboro responded. He praised the work of the firefighters and the Knox County Communications center which was dispatching calls to a chimney fire in Camden and other emergencies during the time of the cement plant fire.

Electricity was cut off for the area of the plant where the fire was located.

There was also a request for a large amount of foam to be available in the event it was needed.

Dragon Plant Manager Martin Turecky said Wednesday afternoon that no customers will be affected and distribution of cement is continuing. He said that the production line that mills down clinker into cement was not damaged.

The Maine Department of Environmental Protection also responded to the incident because of the fuel oil leak but found no contamination of the grounds and did not issue a notice of violation to the firm.

Turecky said the investigation into how the fire occurred is ongoing and he did not comment until the cause was determined.

Crews responded to an electrical fire at the cement plant Dec. 17, but that fire was quickly contained.

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thomaston maine

ImmuCell hopes to raise \$9 million by selling more shares

Maine trade association honors 3 companies, school

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UPDATED: Multiple fire departments respond to Dragon Cement fire

Tue, 03/26/2019 - 8:15pm

THOMASTON – A large oil leak that spread into a room with mechanical equipment erupted into flames at Dragon Cement, in Thomaston, Tuesday, March 26, resulting in structural damage to the facility’s Core Building.

Approximately 75 firefighters, representing eleven departments, assisted with extinguishing the fire, which was reported to Knox County Communications Center at 7:28 p.m., by an employee.

Dragon employees evacuated the building, but stayed on the grounds, providing on-going information to responders.

Upon arrival, members of the Thomaston and Rockland crews encountered heavy fire on three floors of the building at the end of the kiln on the Rockland side of the building (the tower is on the west side of the facility).

According to Thomaston Fire Chief Mikial Mazzeo, crews learned from an employee that a large leak/spill of #2 fuel oil had been seen on the floor. That oil flowed into a below grade mechanical area.

When it reached the mechanical area, the fuel ignited, spreading back to its origin and ultimately throughout the building.

The fire was stopped just as it was entering a lab and control room areas.

Twenty pieces of fire apparatus, along with Thomaston Ambulance, Central Maine Power, Dragon Products staff, Knox County Emergency Management and a foam trailer from Waldo County’ EMA, were assigned to the incident. The foam trailer, a large tanker filled with firefighting foam, was cancelled while en route.

“The fire crews did an excellent job to confine the fire to the building of origin, which seemed to be a monumental task upon arrival of the first units,” said Mazzeo, in his report. “Knox County Communications coordinated the response flawlessly as they continued to handle other emergencies in the county simultaneously including a chimney fire in Camden.”

As policy dictates, Chief Mazzeo notified the State Fire Marshal’s Office. However, no investigation ensued, since the cause of fire has been determined accidental and due to mechanical failure.

The Department of Environmental Protection was also notified, due to the oil leak.

No one was injured during, or as a result of, the fire.

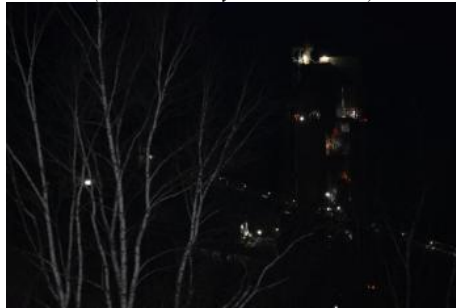
The fire was extinguished at 9:43 p.m., and all units had cleared the scene by 10:45 p.m.

Reach Sarah Thompson at news@penbaypilot.com

THOMASTON — A three-alarm fire sent firefighters from Thomaston, Rockport, Cushing, Friendship, Union, Owls Head, South Thomaston, Rockland, Warren, Waldoboro and St. George, to Dragon Cement in Thomaston to fight a structure fire Tuesday night, March 26.



(Photo courtesy Derek Robbins)



Dragon Cement tower. (Photo by Sarah Thompson)



Power was cut off to the cement-making plant on Route 1 in Thomaston as firefighters battled a roaring blaze inside a structure.

“First due crews found heavy smoke and fire from multiple floors,” reported Rockland Fire Chief Chris Whytock. “We operated under the command of Thomaston Car 1 and were joined with multiple other departments throughout Knox and Waldo County.”

The fire was reported at 7:30 p.m. by employees, who evacuated the facility.

Thomaston Police Department is also on scene, as well as Thomaston EMS and Rockland EMS.

Mutual aid departments began clearing the scene after 9:45 p.m.

All remaining units cleared the scene at 10:50 p.m.

Dragon Products produces Portland and masonry cements.

This story will be updated when more details become available.