

Police: 3 dead in shooting at plant in Tennessee

USA TODAY NETWORK Ariana Sawyer, The Tennessean 9:22 p.m. EDT September 22, 2016



(Photo: Caitie McMekin / USA TODAY NETWORK - Tennessee)

ATHENS, Tenn. — Three people are dead after a shooting Thursday at a factory (<http://tne.ws/2dnpDtV>) in Tennessee.

The shooter's body was found in a bathroom of the Thomas & Betts plant in McMinn County, dead of what "appears to be a self-inflicted gunshot wound," Athens Police Chief Chuck Ziegler said.

Witnesses described "some attempted shooting in the front office and actual shooting deep inside the factory on the north side and the middle," Ziegler said.

Police responded to the scene at about 4:15 p.m.

Officers arrived and found people "streaming" from all exits of the plant, Ziegler said.

Authorities have not identified the shooter or the victims, who were all plant employees. The shooter apparently used a semi-automatic pistol, Ziegler said.

Tennessee Bureau of Investigation agents also responded to the scene, along with the Tennessee Highway Patrol.

Thomas & Betts Corp., with headquarters in suburban Memphis, designs and makes electrical components used in industrial, commercial, lighting and utility markets. The 118-year-old company is a unit of Swiss industrial conglomerate ABB.

"Our loss is profound," ABB said in a news statement. "Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims' families during this difficult time. We will have grief counselors available to all of our employees at the facility."

Ziegler said the parent company was sending teams to assist employees as they deal with the situation.

The plant does not have its own security, he said.

"Everyone's in shock," Zeigler said. "I had several personal longtime friends in there when the shooting was going on."

Authorities called Thursday's shooting the city's first case of mass violence in recent memory.

"This is still a fairly small community, and folks know each other," McMinn County Sheriff Joe Guy said.

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