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## Fire chief hits back at Vance blast

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Reporter: USMA RAJA and DAWN ECKERSLEY  
Date online: 24/04/2009

### Brigade let Maple burn, says Miller

A FIRE chief has slammed stinging claims by controversial kitchen trader Vance Miller that they didn't do enough to save his empire.

In a damning statement through his spokeswoman, Mr Miller (43) said firefighters made a decision not to go inside Maple Mill 2 — allowing it to burn to the ground.

The colourful businessman, who had his homes in Ramsbottom and Calderdale firebombed in August, 2006, watched in horror on Tuesday night as 100 firefighters fought 60ft flames at his Rock Solid Kitchens firm in Cardwell Street, Hathershaw.

It began around a diesel generator before spreading to wooden pallets and causing gas cylinders to explode, destroying six-storey Maple Mill 2, used for production.

Following the multi-million-pound blaze, Mr Miller revealed he had been unable to get insurance for the mill for machinery and stock.

Mr Miller's spokeswoman, who didn't want to be named, said: "We feel the fire brigade allowed the fire to take hold before making any attempt to fight it.

"It was a very small fire that could have been tackled but they made a decision not to go in the mill and let it burn.

"They are fire-watchers rather than fire-fighters. Vance has no faith in the fire brigade.

"Members of staff had to put fires out in neighbouring Maple Mill 1 to stop that taking hold while firemen watched."

Assistant county fire officer Tony Ciaramella hit back at the damning allegations and blamed faulty fire-safety equipment in the mill.

He said: "Our priority when tackling incidents must always be the safety of the public and our firefighters.

"Our first fire engine arrived within three minutes of the first of some 100 calls received, the earliest of which reported cylinders exploding and people still inside the building.

"Once it was confirmed that all staff had left the building, firefighters withdrew for their own safety. This was due to information received about conditions within the mill, such as holes in the floors, flammable stock and defective fixed fire-fighting equipment.

"Crews worked extremely hard throughout the night."

An investigation is under way to determine the cause.

Preparations are now being made to demolish the remaining part of the mill. There are still four homes in Dowry Street cordoned off, their owners kept out.

Residents have raised concerns about asbestos being present in the mill, but the fire brigade say their investigations so far have found no evidence of it.

Concerns about water supplies running out from the Alexandra Park lake supply and endangering fish life have now been addressed by the decision to switch to a hydrant supply. Medlock Bridge Angling

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Club was worried about the danger to fish life in both the lake and a linked duck pond.

Council officers are working closely with the club to ensure that measures are taken to protect species on the site.

## Have Your Say

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Having visited the mill numerous times to purchase kitchens and components, I can well understand the fire fighters not dashing in Hollywood style. I don't think that there was too much time spent on the implementation of health and safety procedures and maintenance of the mills! Ps I never took the lift.

By Flywhistler @ 24/04/2009 13:06:06

[Report this comment \(5861\)](#)

I like Vance and if he ever stood in our ward as a candidate,I am sure like others, people would be falling overthemselves to vote for him!

By Alex de large @ 24/04/2009 13:20:32

[Report this comment \(5870\)](#)

We the residents of dowry st, close to the mill cannot praise the fire service enough,they did everything in thier power to try and contain the fire and to save our homes. God Bless each and everyone of them.

By evethere @ 24/04/2009 13:47:08

[Report this comment \(5873\)](#)

does vance think a life is more valuable than his shoddy kitchen buisness? good ridance and dont come back! oh and next time you dial 999 vance i hope its engaged.

By alex wood @ 24/04/2009 13:55:52

[Report this comment \(5874\)](#)

Good on the fire chief after all I doubt Mr Miller has even broke a sweat working in his life, well done to the brave men and women of the fire brigade. At least the important people are grateful even if Mr Miller isnt.

By Tracy @ 24/04/2009 15:14:21

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A propane cylinder exploding is no different to a bomb. Tell you what Mr Miller, why not let someone you are close to endanger their lives by doing this - maybe you will understand then why the brigade took the action they did.

By jocrad @ 24/04/2009 15:24:25

[Report this comment \(5877\)](#)

As the fire service is paid for through the council tax, who pays for the clear up of Maple mill? is that the council tax payers as well? if it is, vance should stop moaning, its the people of oldham who should be annoyed, if they end up paying for a man banned from running a business flaunting the law.

By deedee @ 24/04/2009 18:28:08

[Report this comment \(5882\)](#)

LIFE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN DODGY KITCHENS ARE US.WELL DONE TO THE FIRE CHIEF FOR NOT ENDANGERING HIS MEN. AS WE ALL KNOW THERE IS NO PROFIT IN INSURANCE AND I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW HOW YOU CAN RUN A BUSINESS WITHOUT IT HE SHOULD BE MADE TO SELL EVERYTHING HE OWNS TO PAY FOR THE FIRE BRIGADE AND THE STRESS TO ALL THE RESIDENTS AND THE POLUTION TO THE ENVOROMENT

By kardan @ 24/04/2009 20:44:13

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Vance Miller has got a nerve, those firemen worked extremely hard to gain control of that fire. If anybody is to blame it is him for his inappropriate, unprofessional behaviour and his lack of disregard for the justice and legal system!

By shawmack @ 24/04/2009 22:20:18

[Report this comment \(5888\)](#)

This is the best bit of news I have ever read!

By louiseb @ 10/05/2009 22:57:24

[Report this comment \(6353\)](#)

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