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Fire department employees walk outside the Tesla car factory after production came to a standstill and workers were evacuated following a power outage, in Gr?nheide, Germany, Tuesday, March 5, 2024. (Sebastian Gollnow/dpa via AP)

A view of the Tesla car factory after production came to a standstill and workers were evacuated following a power outage, in Gr?nheide, Germany, Tuesday, March 5, 2024. (Sebastian Gollnow/dpa via AP)

A vehicle from the security service drives by the Tesla car factory after production came to a standstill and workers were evacuated following a power outage, in Gr?nheide, Germany, Tuesday, March 5, 2024. (Sebastian Gollnow/dpa via AP)

BERLIN (AP) -- Production at Tesla's electric vehicle plant in Germany came to a standstill and workers were evacuated Tuesday after a power outage that officials suspected was caused by arson. Elon Musk, Tesla's CEO, condemned the incident.

The interior ministry in the state of Brandenburg, where the plant is located, said unidentified people were suspected of deliberately setting fire to a high-voltage transmission line on a power pylon. The state criminal investigation department began an investigation.

The report said a far-left group called Volcano Group said it was behind the fire, accused Tesla of "extreme exploitation conditions" and called for the "complete destruction of the gigafactory." It was not immediately clear who the email was sent to or who was behind the group.

Referring to the possible attackers, Musk, who owns about 13% of Tesla stock, wrote on X, formerly Twitter, that "these are either the dumbest eco-terrorists on Earth or they're puppets of those who don't have good environmental goals."

The power outage came as environmental activists have been protesting in a forest near the plant against plans by Tesla to expand. Dozens of activists have put up tents and built treehouses, a tactic used in previous environmental protests.

The early morning fire caused power to fail in surrounding towns, including Gr?nheide, where the factory is located. Electricity was restored after a few hours in the nearby towns and villages, but Tesla remained without energy and authorities said it would likely take several days to restore it at the plant.

That has drawn opposition from environmentalists and some other local groups, which also worry about the possible effect on the area's water supply. In a nonbinding vote in mid-February, residents of the municipality

rejected Tesla's plans, which still need approval by local authorities.

"We are very concerned about the safety of our employees here at the site," Thierig said. "Nevertheless, I would like to emphasize once again that we managed to bring the plants to a very controlled standstill despite the difficult situation. At no time was there any danger to people or the environment."

"If a left-wing extremist motive is confirmed, then this is further proof that the left-wing extremist scene does not shy away from attacks on critical energy infrastructures," the minister said in a written statement. "This shows enormous criminal energy."

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