

Fire Rages At Chemical Plant Near Detroit

COREY WILLIAMS Associated Press Writer - August 27, 2009

HAMTRAMCK, Mich. (AP) — A fire broke out Thursday at a chemical plant near Detroit, sending flames and black smoke hundreds of feet into the air and forcing a nearby expressway to be closed.

A Hamtramck fire department employee said the fire broke out about 11:30 a.m. The employee, who didn't identify himself, said Detroit and Highland Park fire departments have been called in to aid his city's firefighters.

The fire is at Sterling Services, a company involved in the biofuel business.

There were no reports of injuries.

Amtrak passenger rail service was suspended between Pontiac and Detroit, about 20 miles apart. Amtrak spokesman Marc Magliari said passengers will be shuttled between the cities by charter bus.

"I saw it burning out of the office window. It's been burning since about 11 o'clock. There were a couple of pops, three pops now," said Tom Lijana, who works at an office about 300 yards from the plant. He said his company, the Bing Group, hadn't been told to evacuate as of about 12:20 p.m.

"I've lived here over 30 years and this is the first time that we've ever seen anything like this," said neighbor Lutalo Sephers, 34. Police were going door-to-door on his street and using loud speakers to tell residents to evacuate.

A Detroit police officer at the scene who didn't give his name said authorities were also evacuating homes in Detroit, which surrounds Hamtramck.

The plant is in an industrial area with several small factories, and workers from nearby businesses paused to watch the blaze.

The company has no history of violations with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, agency spokesman Robert McCann said.

He said the company is registered as a bulk petroleum facility that stores large quantities of gasoline or other fuels.

"We haven't had any issues with them in the past," McCann said.

State or federal environmental officials will monitor air quality at the scene, he said.

Fire Rages At Chemical Plant Near Detroit

Published on Chem.Info (<http://www.chem.info>)

Sterling Services Ltd. is a subsidiary of Southfield-based Sterling Oil & Chemical Co. Inc., according to a company Web site. The Hamtramck facility is on more than five acres and has a storage capacity of about 5 million gallons.

June Whitlock, 70, who lives across the street from the plant, said the fire prevented her from returning home after morning bingo at a community center.

She didn't seem concerned about the fire possibly reaching her house.

"I've got good insurance," she said.

Source URL (retrieved on 03/29/2015 - 12:10am):

<http://www.chem.info/news/2009/08/fire-rages-chemical-plant-near-detroit>