Chevron: Two Still Missing after Rig Fire

the Associated Press

SAN RAMON, Calif. (AP) — Chevron Corp. said it was still searching Tuesday for two contractors who are missing after an offshore drilling rig in Nigeria caught fire.

Chevron, based in San Ramon, Calif., said 152 workers were safely evacuated from the rig and a nearby barge after the exploration rig caught fire Monday. Two of the workers remain hospitalized due to minor burns, and others are being held for medical observation.

Chevron said the natural gas well was still burning Tuesday, and the rig had partially collapsed. The company said it's unclear what caused the accident, though equipment on the surface might have failed, causing the rig to lose control over the well. The K.S. Endeavor rig was drilling the well about six miles offshore in about 40 feet of water.

Chevron owns a 40 percent interest in the well and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corp. owns a 60 percent interest.

Chevron hired the Transocean Ltd. rig Baltic to drill a relief well at the site, and it said the process could "extend for some period." Chevron said it could not estimate how long the well would burn or when the relief well would begin operating.

About 13 barrels of fuel have been spilled because of the accident, according to Chevron, making a small sheen that is visible on the water's surface. The rig produced about 2,000 barrels per day.

Chevron Nigeria Limited owns a 40 percent interest in the well. The Nigerian National Petroleum Corp. owns the rest.

Shares of Chevron rose 63 cents to close Tuesday at $106.72.

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