



UPDATE: Cause of refinery explosion under investigation; one still hospitalized

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ROXANA – After an explosion late Sunday afternoon in Roxana shook residents' homes, many people are wondering what occurred at the nearby Phillips 66 Refinery to cause it.

Spokesperson for the refinery, Melissa Erker, said the cause is still under investigation. She said the investigation started Sunday evening after the fire was quickly extinguished. She said it happened in an operating area working with crude oil. The entire refinery complex is dedicated to converting such crude into usable resources.

During one of the steps in that process, however, something went wrong. What that something is, though, is currently under investigation.

Following the explosion, one contract worker was taken to a local hospital to be treated. He was able to walk to an ambulance, but is still receiving treatments at that hospital at this time, Erker said. She could not provide information on his condition.

As for those who heard the explosion – some of whom reported their homes shaking – Erker said they are not facing any increased hazards from the incident. She said the refinery works through local first responders to ensure the safety of their residents.

In fact, many police and fire departments in the area were on-hand and ready to assist the refinery on containing the incident, but their role became calming people via social media updates. Erker said the professionals within the refinery were able to quickly extinguish the blaze from within.

“We have two foam pumpers inside the plant,” Erker said. “Most people only see them in parades when we bring them out. We have highly-skilled folks operating them and ready to respond. They train for thousands of hours on the equipment to be ready for situations like these. That's why the fire was put out so fast. It looked really big to people, you can see that with the posts on social media, but we were able to put it out quickly.”

If ever the worst-case scenario does occur at the refinery – which would be a rare occurrence given the amount of safety, training and redundancies involved at the place – Erker said local fire departments and law enforcement would be able to quickly get word to their citizens about whatever needs done next.

As far as the (admittedly scary) incident went Sunday, those professionals were able to simply tell those they serve and protect that everything was safe for them, and that the explosion was under control at that time.

“There are lots of safeguards in place,” Erker said. “We would work with local law enforcement if ever there was a need to shelter in place. We've operated here for 100 years. We understand the technology and what we're operating.”