

# Huge fire breaks out at Philadelphia oil refinery

June 21 2019

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The Philadelphia Energy Solutions (PES) refinery complex is seen here in October 2014

A huge blaze erupted at a Philadelphia oil refinery early Friday, injuring five people, forcing residents to shelter in place for hours and causing

gasoline prices to rise, officials said.

Footage on the city's NBC TV affiliate showed plumes of smoke billowing from the Philadelphia Energy Solutions (PES) refining complex. The fire could be seen for miles.

Philadelphia officials described the blaze as contained but still burning, according to a city press release issued at midday.

"The Fire Marshal's Office will investigate the cause and origin of the fire once the incident is over and the scene is safe to enter," Fire Commissioner Adam Thiel said in a statement released by city officials. "For now, this remains a dynamic situation."

Officials reported that five people were treated on site or at the refinery's health clinic, but Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney said none of the injuries appeared to be serious.

The US Chemical Safety Board said it had deployed a four-person team to investigate.

The blaze in south Philadelphia broke out around 4:00 am (0800 GMT), officials said.

According to the city's office of emergency management, PES reported that a vat of butane exploded.

Officials initially asked residents and workers at businesses near the scene to remain indoors until further notice.

The shelter-in-place order, which was "precautionary due to smoke plume," was later lifted, emergency management officials said on Twitter.

But drivers were asked to avoid the area if possible to clear the way for firefighters and emergency personnel.

Preliminary testing found no ambient carbon monoxide, combustible hydrocarbons or hydrogen sulfides. Authorities are awaiting additional test results, the city's health department said.

Gasoline prices on the New York Mercantile Exchange rose, with the benchmark futures contract for July up 4.1 percent near 1830 GMT.

The PES refining complex—which has existed in some form for more than 150 years—is the largest of its kind on the US East Coast, according to its website, and processes 335,000 barrels of crude per day.

PES has struggled financially in recent years, emerging from bankruptcy last year with Credit Suisse Asset Management and Bardin Hill as controlling owners, with Carlyle Group and Sunoco holding a minority stake.

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