

Propane Tank Fire – Lincoln, CA



LINCOLN, CA - Lincoln Fire Chief David Whitt says a team of specialists flown in from Texas had devised a plan to extinguish the fire burning from the rail tanker.

The plan, referred to as a "Hot Tap", will involve digging a large drainage pond a safe distance away with a bulldozer. Then a second team would drill a hole in the burning railcar, insert a pipe, and releases the propane into the pond where, Whitt speculated it would burn off within 24 to 48 hours.

While original speculation was that the tanker would be moved, Whitt said the railcar would stay in place while the plan was carried out.

Whitt conceded the operation will involve a high level of danger.

"With this type of liquid and the amount of liquid that we have, the propane liquid, we're looking at a mile of potential shrapnel if this thing blows," he said.

Specialized Response Solutions from Fort Worth is trained to deal with scenarios of this nature and is equipped with tools to accomplish the drilling and draining with the least amount of risk possible, according to the fire chief.



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"The tank cars that were involved, the primary tank car had 30,000 gallons of propane, was attached to another 30,000 gallons propane, was attached to another 30,000 gallons propane which had another, um, give or take 60,000 gallons of propane within the yard itself," said Whitt.

He said the best guestimates of the amount of propane were 170,000 gallons of propane to 500,000 gallons.

Fire trucks continue to pour water on the blaze.

"If we don't keep those cool, and we don't put, uh, a lot of water, copious amounts of water to keep the integrity of that tank secure, then we have catastrophic failure of the tank, which means we have a very large problem on our hands," said Whitt. "We, quite frankly, are very lucky."

The mandatory evacuation will remain in place and Highway 65 through Lincoln remains blocked to traffic.