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Victorville Daily Press

Freeway connecting California to Las Vegas shut down after truck hauling batteries crashes

Brian Day, Victorville Daily Press

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72

The entire 15 Freeway was shut down east of Barstow Friday after a big rig hauling lithium-ion batteries crashed and caught fire, blocking Southern California's link to Las Vegas for more than nine hours, officials said.

The crash occurred just before 6 a.m. in the freeway's northbound lanes between Barstow and Baker, according to the California Highway Patrol.

Firefighters encountered burning lithium-ion batteries, prompting them to call for a hazardous material response, logs show.



A big rig hauling lithium-ion batteries overturned and caught fire, prompting a full closure of the 15 Freeway between Barstow and Baker on Friday, July 26, 2024.

The burning batteries posed multiple threats, San Bernardino County Fire Protection District officials said.

See updated coverage: [Still no timeline set to open northbound I-15 to Las Vegas after hazmat fire](#)

"This product, when involved with fire, can escalate to a thermal runaway, which requires massive amounts of water to extinguish," the agency said in a written statement. "To ensure public safety, a hard closure of both northbound and southbound lanes of the 15 freeway has been enforced. Public safety is of the utmost importance, and keeping the area clear allows emergency responders to manage the situation effectively and prevent potential harm."



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In addition to the possibility of thermal runaway, in which the batteries undergo a chain reaction and potentially explode due to puncturing or crushing, lithium-ion batteries also produce toxic fumes, officials said.



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Numerous triangular yellow placards displaying lightning bolt symbols to warn of electrical danger could be seen adorning the burning trailer.

Northbound traffic was stopped at Afton Road, while southbound traffic was halted at Basin Road.

No information was available regarding the condition of the driver.

Southbound lanes of the freeway were reopened about 3 p.m., while a "hard closure" remained in effect for northbound lanes, according to CHP and fire officials. Officials began intermittently allowing northbound traffic to use southbound lanes to pass. Southbound traffic was being intermittently stopped, however, to allow officials to bring in heavy equipment.

There was no estimate regarding when northbound lanes would reopen.

The batteries continued burning beyond 5 p.m.

Motorists reported spending hours sitting in place while temperatures soared to around 110 degrees. One southbound driver said he used up nearly an entire tank of gas idling on the freeway before turning around to head back north.

Several ambulances were summoned to the area to assist people suffering from heat-related illness.

"We are actively addressing the needs of motorists stuck without water and experiencing other issues. We strongly recommend that all individuals attempting to travel northbound divert and seek alternate routes as the closure is expected to be extended due to the hazmat and suppression operations related to the truck fire," according to an statement issued by fire officials Friday afternoon.

"Numerous calls for service have been received by our dispatch center from both Interstate 40 and the 15 Freeway. These include individuals exhibiting medical conditions and heat-related emergencies," the statement continued. "In response, county fire has brought additional ambulances and paramedic fire apparatus to the area to address these calls."

"Expect major delays," the CHP said via [social media](#).

Safety Advisory for Baker Incident: ⚠️ Alternative Routes and High Temperatures ⚠️ Use Caution on Alternative Routes:-...

Posted by [San Bernardino County Fire](#) on [Friday, July 26, 2024](#)

More: [Big rig fire on 15 Freeway in the Cajon Pass snarls morning commute](#)

Anyone able to was urged to avoid the area and take alternative routes, such as the 40 Freeway.

Officials also urged motorists not to attempt to take dirt roads alongside the freeway to get around the traffic. "Vehicles often get stuck when redirected by digital maps," the agency added.

This article originally appeared on [Victorville Daily Press](#): [Freeway connecting California to Las Vegas shut down near Barstow](#)

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Travelers stuck between L.A. and Las Vegas as closure on I-15 halts traffic

KTLA - Los Angeles

Sat, July 27, 2024, 10:13 PM PDT



An overturned big rig and resulting hazmat situation left motorists stranded in the desert just off the crucial interstate between Los Angeles and Las Vegas, and as the situation progresses, concerns about food, water and fuel are increasing. The problem started early Friday morning when a big rig carrying lithium batteries overturned and caught fire. The crash and resulting fire happened near the Afton Road exit just off the 15 Freeway between Barstow and Baker. I-15, which is the major roadway that connects L.A. and Las Vegas, had been at a virtual standstill for hours.

KTLA's Shelby Nelson reports on July 27, 2024. Details:

<https://ktla.com/news/local-news/motorists-stuck-between-los-angeles-and-las-vegas-as-a-hard-closure-on-i-15-stifles-traffic/>

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