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Feds Declare Regional Emergency For Midwest States After Oil Refinery Has ‘Unanticipated Shutdown’

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The [Department of Transportation](#) declared a regional emergency Saturday affecting four Midwest states after a [fire](#) earlier this week caused an “unanticipated shutdown” of a BP [oil](#) refinery in Indiana.

BP Whiting, the sixth largest refinery in the U.S. refining over 400,000 barrels of oil per day, shut down to undergo damage assessment after a fire knocked out the plant’s electrical power and cooling water systems on Wednesday, Reuters [reported](#). The shutdown caused the federal government to take action and address the looming shortage of fuel output that will affect Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin, states that collectively receive up to 25% of their fuel from the Whiting refinery.

“This Declaration addresses the emergency conditions creating a need for immediate transportation of gasoline, diesel, and jet fuel and provides necessary relief,” the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) said in a [statement](#).

The emergency declaration gives states an exemption from some federal regulations, such as waiving U.S. truck driver rules that

dictate maximum driving times. However, when truckers return to normal operations after providing emergency assistance, they will be required to take a 10-hour break if they exceed 14 hours in emergency relief, according to FMCSA.

Sources told Reuters that the refinery's restart date remained unknown as all of its units would have to be checked for damage and possibly repaired. BP spokesperson Christina Audisho explained Friday that the company was "continuing to assess when a restart of the affected units can take place."

The shutdown has already caused [spikes](#) in fuel prices as CBOB, a [common](#) grade of gasoline, was up 30 cents in the Chicago area, and ultra-low sulfur diesel jumped 17 cents. Drivers in the four affected states are facing average gas prices of \$3.87, [according](#) to AAA.

Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer (D) responded to the refinery's shutdown by issuing an [executive order](#) that lifts some requirements for fuel transporters and "temporarily suspends certain laws and regulations to accelerate the transition to the fall fuel supply and takes advantage of existing stocks of fuel, contingent on the Environmental Protection Agency making similar changes."

Whitmer's order lasts for the duration of the emergency or until September 15. "The impacts of the outage at the Whiting facility will be widespread across our region, and I am taking proactive steps to help Michiganders get the fuel they need to drive their cars and help businesses keep their products moving," the governor said.

