

Massive Sewri oil depot fire contained; disaster averted

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Dense smoke covered the city's eastern skyline after a massive fire broke out at an oil depot in Sewri on Saturday evening *Dinesh Parab dna*

A major fire broke out in an [oil pipeline](#) near the Castrol oil depot in [Wadala](#) on Saturday evening. As many as nine fire engines, six jumbo water tankers and three ambulances were rushed to the spot, located at the [Mumbai Port Trust](#) land, to douse the inferno. While no injury or casualties were reported, the entire Wadala and [Sewri](#) area got covered in thick, black smoke that persisted throughout the evening.

According to fire brigade officials, the fire broke out at around 6.45pm in a pipeline carrying petrol to HPCL around 6.46pm. According to MbPT officials, a leakage in the pipeline was discovered in the pipeline on Saturday afternoon, following which operations were stopped. Yashodhan Wanage, deputy chairman of MbPT, said the pipeline valves were shut and the pipeline was being flushed of the fuel. "As a precaution, a few fire tenders were already kept on standby. Prima facie, the fire broke out in the residual fuel in the pipeline because of static electricity," he said, adding that the entire operation was a controlled one.

Saturday's fire was a narrow escape from what could have been a major disaster, since the entire area, from Chembur and Trombay to the docks in Sewri and further southwards is home to several chemical industries and oil refineries. The high-risk area also has oil depots of several companies where hundreds of oil tankers are kept in storage. A fire disaster in the area could have a cascading effect all the way to the island city.

MV Deshmukh, fire advisor to Maharashtra government, said most oil companies located in the area follow the Oil Safety Industries Directorate (OSID) guidelines, such as keeping floating roofs for the tankers, yard fire hydrants and ensuring the presence of dykes to contain oil in the eventuality of oil leakage.

"However, what is difficult to implement in a city like Mumbai is creating buffer zones around the storage area, which would be no-development zones, so that a disaster does not spread to the habitable areas," said Deshmukh recalling a massive fire that took place in a Jaipur oil depot in 2009, that went on for a week.

"There was a minor leakage between HPCL refinery and HPCL wells since morning," said Ravi Parmar, Chairman of Mumbai Port Trust. Fuel from the leakage got accumulated in a ditch nearby, eventually it resulted into the fire by evening. "At the moment, cooling operations are underway and foam has been sprayed to avoid a further blaze. The situation is under control and there aren't any casualties," added Parmar.