

Container with Lithium-Ion Batteries Catches Fire at Port of Montreal



Smoke from the battery fire caused warnings in Montreal (CBC News screen shot)

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A container transporting lithium-ion batteries caught fire Monday, September 23, on the dock at the Port of Montreal causing evacuations and warnings for residents to stay indoors for several hours. There were widespread images of smoking blanketing parts of the city and even today people are complaining of a strong chemical smell in the air.

Fire officials said it was a difficult fire due to the nature of the batteries and fears that it would turn into a chemical runaway situation. Reports indicate more than 100 firefighters responded to the two-alarm blaze. CBC said they had to borrow a special drill from fire teams at the city's airport to access the container.

The first reports of the fire were received around 2:20 p.m. local time in Montreal and shortly thereafter the city issued an alert for residents around the port to remain indoors. They were instructed to close doors and windows and shut off ventilation systems. Between 50 and 100 residents were also evacuated from their homes as a precaution. Electrical power was also turned off in the area.

The container was on the dock and firefighters said it held around 15,000 kg of lithium. One report said the container was coming from Poland and bound for Windsor, Canada raising speculation it was for the auto industry. It is unclear when the container arrived, but the Montreal Gazette reports that *Vistula Maersk* was on the dock near the scene of the fire.

Because of the nature of the fire, a special hazardous materials intervention team was brought in. They chose to water the container and not attempt to enter. One firefighter suffered a minor injury to his knee during the effort.

By about 7:30 p.m. the shelter order was lifted after the fire was contained, but it continued to burn overnight. The fire was extinguished Tuesday, September 24 by 7:00 a.m.

The Port of Montreal's team is investigating the fire. A special team was coming in to handle the removal of the material.