

Megaload bound for Montana is north of Moscow

Elaine Williams/Lewiston Tribune

A megaload that left the Port of Wilma Sunday is taking a break after encountering peaceful protests in Moscow and Lewiston.

The hydrocracker section bound for a Calumet refinery in Great Falls, Mont., is at the Latah/Benewah county line, about 25 miles north of Moscow, said Idaho State Police Capt. Lonnie Richardson.

It will wait to resume its trip until at least this evening so that its movements can be coordinated with construction farther north along U.S. Highway 95, Richardson said.

The state police officers are being paid by Bigge Crane, the contractor hauling the megaload, to travel with the shipment. Richardson said troopers are there to coordinate emergency responses, make sure other vehicles on the road don't face significant delays and to prevent protesters from blocking its progress.

So far, he said, the protesters haven't presented much of a problem.

Fewer than 10 protesters were in Lewiston, some with signs and others with cameras. In Moscow, he said the opponents numbered about 30, yelled on the sidewalks and held up banners.

"They were pretty respectful," Richardson said.

The megaload, which takes up two lanes of highway, has three segments of its trip left in Idaho. When it moves, it will travel between 10 p.m. and 5:30 a.m., pulling over about every five miles to let other vehicles pass.

It is scheduled to reach Athol, just north of Coeur d'Alene, in its first segment. In the second, it will go to milepost 44 on Idaho State Highway 200, near Hope. It will leave Idaho and enter Montana on its third segment.

The shipment is one of three that were originally shipped to the Port of Wilma for an expansion at the Calumet refinery. The other two have left by rail.

It's not clear if the other two shipments have reached the refinery or not. Calumet officials have indicated they will provide only general information in quarterly reports. The most recent, issued earlier this month, provides a three-sentence update.

"Calumet continues to make progress on a project designed to double production capacity at its Montana refinery by 10,000 to 20,000 barrels per day," according to the report. "The (company) continues to estimate that this project will be completed during the first quarter of 2016. The current estimated total cost of the expansion project is approximately \$400 million."

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