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WA gas in short supply after explosion

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WESTERN Australia faces days of disruptions to its gas supply after a pipeline rupture and fire at Apache Energy's Varanus Island gas processing plant, about 100km from Karratha on the North West Shelf.

Apache Energy's Varanus Island facilities

Apache said no one was injured and 153 people were evacuated following the incident involving a pipeline transporting oil and gas from offshore production facilities to the island's processing facilities.

Varanus Island supplies about 30% of WA's domestic natural gas requirements, with most of the 330 million cubic feet of natural gas it produces each day going to industrial customers.

The company has declared force majeure to customers and is assessing how supplies will be disrupted though it maintains retail customers will not be affected by the shutdown.

Managing director Tim Wall, who will inspect Varanus Island today with company representatives and stakeholders from government, said during a press briefing any estimate on repairs to the pipelines had to wait until the company had looked at the degree of damage to the infrastructure.

Western Australia Energy Minister Fran Logan said there would be "no problem" with electricity supply "in the short term".

Chief executive Steven Farris had said earlier the company had notified government authorities and customers affected by the disruption in gas supply and would resume production as soon as possible.

"Our priorities are the safety of our personnel, securing the facilities, assuring that the environmental impact is limited to the island, and resuming throughput of oil and gas production."

Fourteen people representing the core emergency response team from Apache remained on the island to monitor the situation.

The incident marks the second time this year that WA has experienced a major disruption to its domestic gas supply.

In January Woodside Petroleum was forced to shut down the North West Shelf Venture's Karratha gas plant for two days due to electrical problems.