



What is that flare?



A flame burning at the top of a pipe stack can look alarming. Although the sight of flares and the rumbling noise that sometimes accompanies flaring can cause concern, please remember that occasional flaring is a vital part of keeping our facilities

running safely during unplanned operational interruptions or scheduled maintenance activities.

HOW DO FLARES WORK?

During normal operations, materials from the process are collected and routed to recovery tanks for further processing. There, they are converted into products such as gasoline and jet fuel. However, when the operation experiences an interruption, such as a planned shutdown or unplanned loss of power, the materials have to be collected and routed to the site flare system. There, vapors are combined with steam and burned off. This system ensures maximum combustion of hydrocarbons while minimizing emissions into the air.

WHAT IS THAT BLACK SMOKE?

Black smoke from the flare occurs when an insufficient amount of steam is available to burn the hydrocarbons sent to the flare. ExxonMobil personnel are constantly watching the flare system via television monitors so that steam flowing to the flares can be adjusted as needed. In the rare instance of a sudden release of hydrocarbons to the system, there may be a delay in response before sufficient steam can be supplied to the burning process, and black smoke may result.

WHAT IS THAT RUMBLING NOISE?

Occasionally, during flare activity, a rumbling sound, much like far-off thunder, resonates from the system. The rumbling that may be heard is the result of the turbulent mixing of vapors, air and steam during the flaring process.

REGULATING EMISSIONS

The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality strictly regulates emissions from the stacks and limits the density and duration of allowable smoke. In recent years, ExxonMobil in Baton Rouge has taken a number of steps to recover and reprocess excess materials to lessen the flaring on a day-to-day basis. However, use of the flare system is still essential to the safe operation of our facilities.

