

Tank and Petroleum Use Mishaps

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By learning about the misfortunes of others, it is STI's hope to educate the public by creating a greater awareness of the hazards with storage and use of petroleum and chemicals. Please refer to the many industry standards and to the fire and building codes for further guidance on the safe operating practices with hazardous liquids. Thanks and credit for content are given to Dangerous Goods-Hazmat Group Network.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/DangerousGoods/>

USA, KS, ELLSWORTH

AUGUST 30 2007.

LIGHTNING SPARKS TANK BATTERY FIRE EAST OF WILSON

On Aug. 23, members of the Wilson Fire Department responded to an early morning oil tank battery fire east of Wilson.

According to Larry Ptacek, first assistant fire chief, three fire trucks and eight firefighters were paged at 4:15 a.m. to battle the blaze which was started after lightning struck an oil tank battery owned by Trans-Pacific Oil Corporation located on Third Road between Old Highway 40 and Ave. D.

Nick Nelson, one of the first firefighters on the scene, said the tank battery became fully engulfed in fire just five minutes after they arrived.

"It ended up burning up two tanks before we got them extinguished," he said.

Ptacek said one of the tanks contained nearly six feet of oil while the other was completely full.

Firefighters remained on scene until 10 a.m.

There were no injuries reported and no estimate of damage was available.

<http://www.ellsworthinderep.com/web/!site.dll?1188334358109>

UK, LONDON

AUGUST 30 2007.

DISASTER AVERTED AFTER FORKLIFT HITS DRUM OF STYRENE

Jonathan Sher

It was a potentially lethal mix yesterday at a London loading dock -- an errant forklift and a drum filled with a chemical that is toxic, flammable and explosive.

While the city slept before dawn, a forklift operator working at an Adelaide Street trucking firm accidentally pierced a 45-gallon drum, releasing styrene -- a chemical with vapours that can ignite at temperatures of 31C.

Workers at Rapid Delivery at 1010 Adelaide St. S. were quickly evacuated as firefighters rushed to minimize the dangers.

"The concern was an explosion or (a fire)," Capt. Fritz Beck said. "(The firefighters) did an excellent job in preventing a serious problem."

The accident at the loading dock just south of Newbold Street occurred about 4:30 a.m. when a forklift operator tried to lift a pallet and missed.

Wearing protective gear and breathing apparatus, firefighters who specialize in containing hazardous spills cleared the building and truck of vapours and stopped the liquid styrene from flowing through a nearby storm sewer.

"None of it got in the Thames River," Beck said.

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Styrene is used to make plastics and is typically shipped with chemicals that inhibit a reaction that could lead to ignition.

<http://lfpres.ca/newsstand/News/Local/2007/08/26/4447209-sun.html>

USA, OH, SALT LAKE CITY

AUGUST 31 2007.

SETTLEMENT REACHED FOR WORKER BURNED IN TANK EXPLOSION

Pamela Manson

A worker who was burned when the tank he was cleaning at a natural gas plant caught fire reached a confidential settlement today on compensation for his injuries.

Lawyers for Michael Melton and EnCana Oil & Gas (USA) Inc., the owner of the Lisbon Valley plant, struck their deal as a federal jury was deliberating on damages. The jury already had decided earlier this week that the company was 100 percent liable for Melton's injuries.

Kent W. Spence, a Jackson Hole, Wyo., attorney who represented Melton, called the agreement fair.

"Even regular people in America can still get justice against big companies," Spence said.

Melton, who worked for a subcontractor doing cleanup and servicing tasks, was vacuuming water out of the bottom of a tank on July 11, 2004, when it exploded into flames. He was thrown into the tank wall and badly burned.

In a lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in Salt Lake City, Melton claimed EnCana employees had allowed gas to enter the tank through an open valve and that had led to the fire.

The Denver-based company denied being responsible for the accident and alleged that Melton failed to take the required precautionary steps to ensure the tank was safe. An expert who testified for EnCana said static electricity from a hose that allegedly was improperly hooked up to the subcontractor's vacuum truck ignited the blaze.

http://www.sltrib.com/ci_6761961

USA, TX, PLACEDO

SEPTEMBER 2 2007.

BLAZE BATTLED AFTER LIGHTNING STRIKES PLACEDO OIL TANK - PLACEDO, VICTORIA FIREFIGHTERS HAVE FIRE UNDER CONTROL AFTER MORE THAN SIX HOURS

Aprill Brandon

A stormy Friday led to an oil fire in Placedo when lightning struck a tank battery off Farm-to-Market Road 616.

For more than six hours, firefighters from Victoria and the Placedo volunteer fire department battled the blaze, which started after a spark from the lightning hit the oil at the top of the tank, Battalion Chief Roger Hempel said.

The initial call came in about 1:20 p.m. and five units responded. By 3 p.m. the firefighters changed their tactics, letting the fire burn itself out and concentrating on keeping the other oil tanks from catching fire, Hempel said. The fire was extinguished at about 7:50 p.m.

"There was a danger the fire could spread to the oil tank right next to the one on fire, so we began to concentrate our efforts on keeping the one beside it cool," Hempel said. "The tank on fire wasn't worth saving at that point."

The tank battery was on the Schovajsa lease in Placedo, operated by Pegasus Operating Inc.

No one was injured but at least four employees were in the field at the time, about 500 yards away from the tank battery when it was hit, Diane Griffin, who leases the property, said. The men were sitting in a truck at the time, waiting out the thunderstorm.

"We heard a loud BOOM and the truck moved about four inches when the lightning struck," employee Shane Welty said. "Flames were everywhere."

The men immediately dialed 911 and then began to shut off all the oil wells in the field, Welty added.

Griffin said her employees are well trained in safety procedures for situations like the one Friday. They regularly have safety meetings once a month.

"I really crack the whip about things like safety. I'm just so thankful no one was hurt," she said. "They did everything they were supposed to do. It could have been much worse if they hadn't."

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The tank had about 120 barrels of oil in it at the time, Hempel said, and the tank can hold up to 500 barrels. The tank was roughly 24 feet high and had a diameter of 12 feet.

More than 1.25 inches of rain fell in the Victoria area Friday as scattered thunderstorms hit the area on and off, National Weather Service meteorologist Katie Roussy said.

The rainfall led to a few minor accidents in the area, with vehicles getting stuck in ditches and hydroplaning, officials from the Department of Public Safety said. No injuries were reported.

Over the Labor Day weekend, more thunderstorms are possible, with a 60 percent chance of rain today, Sunday and Monday, Roussy said.

<http://www.thevictoriaadvocate.com/428/story/115069.html>

USA, IN, MUNSTER

SEPTEMBER 2 2007.

2,500 GALLONS REMOVED FROM BP LINE

Christine Kraly

A dormant BP pipeline that wreaked smelly havoc on part of Munster last week still contained about 2,500 gallons of crude oil, a BP official said.

In the days following an odorous oil seepage in the town's Somerset subdivision, BP workers tapped into and evacuated the remaining crude from two inactive pipes, including thousands of gallons from the 10-inch discharging line, BP spokesman Ron Rybarczyk said.

BP still is attempting to determine what may have happened in the matter, but it appears the culprit pipe was in a relatively low spot in the system, Rybarczyk said. Workers have tested active lines in Munster -- as well as some others throughout the region -- to determine whether those pipes are functioning properly, Rybarczyk said.

Last week, oil from one of the BP pipelines trickled into the storm sewer in the Somerset community. The leak was contained to the sewer system -- with some fumes emitting from manhole covers -- and did not reach homes, BP officials said.

Despite her worries, BP and town officials say a Munster woman's soiled basement was not caused by the oil leak.

Rybarczyk and Town Manager Tom DeGiulio say Maria Martinez's home in the Twin Creek subdivision is too far, more than 2,000 feet, from the site of the pipeline hole to have been affected.

Three feet of oil-infused water cast a slick film over much of Maria Martinez's basement, her daughter-in-law, Melissa Martinez, said. The family has not fully cleaned the mess, Melissa Martinez said, because they are unsure who is responsible for it.

DeGiulio said the town would not be responsible, adding that a preliminary BP analysis of Martinez's home proves the filmy residue was not crude oil.

http://www.thetimesonline.com/articles/2007/08/31/news/lake_county/doc0a4d06406fc778c862573480002e83c.txt

USA, NY, POUGHKEEPSIE

SEPTEMBER 6 2007.

4 MILLION GALLON FUEL TANK CATCHES FIRE IN POUGHKEEPSIE HOMES EVACUATED, METRO NORTH SERVICE SUSPENDED NORTH OF BEACON

Firefighters are still working to put out a fire burning inside a 4-million-gallon fuel tank stationed near the Hudson River.

The fire is at Love/Effron Fuel Oil Company. Firefighters at the scene said a large plume of smoke rose from the top of the tank as early as 11:30 a.m. The smoke was down to a thin strand by 1:30 p.m.

Metro-North has stopped rail service from the Beacon to Poughkeepsie station, and the U.S. Coast Guard is turning away boats from the area. No injuries have been reported.

An employee who requested anonymity said welders had been working on the tank, and the fire started as a result of the heat or sparks. The tank, filled with home heating oil, was nearly full at the time.

Employees of Love/Effron and a nearby doctors office all evacuated. The tank sits on the shore at the end of Fox Street, on the shore of the Hudson River.

Patrick Delpino was fishing nearby when the fire started.

"I heard a percussion, 'boom,'" Delpino said. "I didn't think anything of it at first."

Emergency crews have brought nets to the river in hopes of controlling a spill if oil leaks into Hudson.

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Heat from the fire has buckled the top of the tank and sides but there has been no official statement about any leaks.

Firefighters have been pumping foam into the tank to douse the blaze. Extra supplies of the foam have been brought in from the IBM plant and a nearby airport.

<http://www.recordonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070905/NEWS/70905014>

USA, S.C, UNION CO

SEPTEMBER 7 2007.

FUEL TANKER SLAMS INTO HOME, INJURES MAN

A man who was sitting on a couch in his home was injured Thursday morning when a fuel tanker truck crashed into his house.

The wreck happened near Highway 176 at Forest Street in Jonesville.

The man was the only person in the house at the time. He was taken away in an ambulance, but he was conscious when he left the scene, witnesses said.

The South Carolina Highway Patrol said that truck driver, Herman Worthy, 54, of Winnsboro, S.C. parked the truck at the Mini-Mart convenience store across the street at about 11:30 a.m. and went into the store.

A clerk told the truck driver that the tractor trailer was rolling, and Worthy ran out, but was unable to do anything to stop the truck before it hit the house, about 150 yards away.

A witness told WYFF that the South Carolina Highway Patrol, the Jonesville Fire Department and a hazardous material team all reported to the scene. Workers from the Department of Transportation were also at the scene of the wreck.

According to the witness, the tanker was carrying at least 9,000 gallons of diesel fuel. The Highway Patrol said that there was no fuel spill in connection with the wreck. The truck is owned by Winnsboro Petroleum.

He said that the impact knocked the house off its foundation and left the cab inside the home.

Butch Parker, a family friend, said, "(I'm) just thankful that the lady that lived here was gone to the bank to cash a check. If she hadn't, she'd have been in that kitchen."

A woman whose husband tried to help the injured man talked to WYFF.

Riley Keith said, "Me and my husband ran down here and the guy was calling out the front door and the truck driver was kind of holding him up. My husband's in the National Guard and he came down here to see if he needed any help and he was trying to hold him up to make sure he was getting enough air."

There was no immediate word on the condition of the man. His name has not yet been released.

<http://www.wyff4.com/news/14058678/detail.html>

USA, CA, SAN DIEGO

SEPTEMBER 8 2007.

FUEL TANKS' REPLACEMENT PLANNED - PLUME AT NAVY FACILITY CREEPING TOWARD BAY

Steve Liewer

Too late to avert an environmental disaster, the Navy is getting ready to replace storage tanks that have leaked about 1.5 million gallons of fuel into the ground and turned parts of the Point Loma Naval Base into a stinking mess.

The five-year, \$140 million replacement project involves building eight huge, aboveground tanks at the base's Defense Fuel Support Point – the largest naval fuel depot in the world. They will replace 54 tanks that are 40 years beyond their expected life span.

Today, the California Coastal Commission is scheduled to review the Navy's proposal at a public hearing in Eureka.

At least three of the old tanks sprang leaks between 1999 and 2003. By the time Navy officials discovered the problem, they were confronting a massive plume of fuel that had reached about 50 feet below ground.

The plume has crept east toward nearby San Diego Bay and north into the historic La Playa neighborhood.

The new tanks will be installed where some of the current ones are located. Together, they will hold 42 million gallons of jet and marine diesel fuel for military ships and aircraft at facilities throughout the region.

"It's extremely important, both to the Department of Defense and the Navy here in San Diego," said Capt. Mark Patton, commander of the base. "It's the only source of fuel that we have here in the southwestern United States."

The Coastal Commission's staff is recommending that its board approve the Navy's tank-replacement plans.

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They say the Navy has met the minor concerns they have raised.

“We’re pretty much convinced this is the least damaging way to go,” said Mark Delaplaine, the commission’s project manager.

Point Loma residents have raised few objections to the project, commission officials said. They seem as eager as the Navy is to get the work moving.

“Everybody wants it done,” said Katheryn Rhodes, founder of the La Playa Heritage Foundation. “The sooner they get it done, the safer it will be.”

The Navy began its cleanup work in 2001, and Patton said the process could stretch up to 20 more years.

He said he is determined to prevent the plume from reaching San Diego Bay and inflicting serious harm on plants and animals.

For years, the Navy believed that only one finger of the plume was heading toward the bay. But in May, contractors discovered another finger that has reached within 300 yards of the water.

The Navy has spent nearly \$60 million to repair the leaks, map the underground plume and clean up the site. Only about 10 percent of the leaked fuel has been recovered, Patton said. The eventual goal is to dig up the tainted soil, clean it on site and reuse it.

Today, contractors plan to start digging an 800-foot, gravel-filled trench just east of the existing tanks in hopes of speeding up the recovery. Forming the trench will cost \$3.5 million.

Once the soil is decontaminated, the Navy will be able to break ground on the new tanks.

The tanks will be circular and double-walled. Each will stand five stories tall and cover nearly half a football field.

They also will feature monitors designed to immediately detect leaks and have improved volume controls to track fuel movement in and out of them.

Workers also will build four catch basins around the replacement tanks to capture rainfall runoff and fuel spills.

The Navy’s plan also includes construction of a facility near the tanks to recover oil from the bilge water of its ships. The current plant is 30 years old.

“It’s time to move on with a new, modern facility,” Patton said.

Such a critical fuel depot, especially one so close to the base’s gate, inevitably poses security risks. Patton said the new tanks will sit back more than 216 feet from the property line, compared with 58 feet now.

The double-walled design of each tank will add a measure of safety.

“Security has been a considerable factor in the construction of this project,” said Brian O’Rourke, a Navy spokesman. “We don’t discuss specific measures, but it’s always a priority.”

For La Playa residents, the most noticeable difference may be the end of the rotten-egg smell that wafts through their neighborhood. The new tanks won’t allow sulfurous fumes to vent into the atmosphere.

Navy officials are expected to choose a contractor for the tank-replacement project in spring 2008, with construction starting later in the year. When work is finished, the new fuel tanks will occupy 35 acres on the base instead of the current 200.

Patton said the reclaimed land will be planted with native vegetation. “(We) will take those 165 acres and make them look more like native Point Loma,” he added.

The project will mean destroying a 100-year-old house on the base that stands where the new fuel-recovery plant would go. Rhodes and other historic preservationists had hoped the Navy would salvage the building – which once was home to the depot’s supervisor – but Patton said it cannot be moved.

Navy officials have agreed to photograph and otherwise document the house and its surrounding landscape.

“I’m hoping they don’t just throw it in the trash and take it to the dump,” Rhodes said.

Although some construction noise and truck traffic are almost inevitable, community leaders said they are working with base officials to minimize those impacts.

Patton has said the Navy will comply with city noise regulations and limit work to between the hours of 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. He also said trucks will line up for inspection in a Navy parking lot on Harbor Drive instead of the two-lane stretch of Rosecrans Street near the base’s main gate.

“It’s going to be a little bit disruptive for the residents down there,” said Patti Adams, former chairwoman of the Point Loma Association, a community group. “But you have to look at the whole picture, the military complex and the need for that fuel. We need to suck it up and do our part.”

<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/metro/20070907-9999-1n7fuel.html>

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UK, AYRSHIRE

SEPTEMBER 10 2007.

BOYS REPORTED AFTER FACTORY BLAST

Three boys have been reported to the Children's Panel after an explosion and major fire at a chemical plant in Ayrshire, police have said.

Flames were spotted at the Nobel Enterprises factory in Stevenston at about 2000 BST on Saturday.

The fire involved highly-flammable nitrocellulose, which is used in inks and coatings.

The main blaze was extinguished overnight but fire crews had to tackle small pockets of fire in the debris.

Strathclyde Police said three boys, two aged 14 and one aged 10, were the subject of a report to the Children's Panel in connection with the incident.

A full report will be sent to the procurator fiscal.

The Children's Panel deals with children and young people under 16, who are alleged to have committed offences or who are in need of care and protection.

A 1km cordon was put up around the Nobel Enterprises plant. There were no reports of injuries.

Paul Connelly, from Strathclyde Fire and Rescue, was in charge of the firefighting operation at the former ICI factory.

At its height there were 20 fire appliances and 75 firefighters tackling the blaze, along with support crews and specialist teams.

These included a mobile laboratory for analysing chemicals.

Speaking from the scene, Mr Connelly told BBC Scotland's Sunday Live programme his crews were faced with a very dramatic situation with flames leaping 200ft in the air.

He said: "What we're doing is surveying the site and inspecting the drums that are still there and extinguishing any small pockets of fire that are still remaining in some of the debris.

"This substance was in an open bunded area so there has been very little property damage and anything that we have had we've been able to deal with very early on in the evening."

The service received dozens of calls about the blast, some from as far away as 20 miles.

James Smith, 54, who lives about half-a-mile from the blaze, described how he heard explosions and saw huge flames as the factory went up at about 2030 BST.

He said: "It was enormous. The flames were a couple of hundred feet high. It was like a white flame."

Mary Ainsworth, 56, said worried relatives called to ask her if she was safe and to say they were worried about her.

"My daughter phoned to tell me not to worry when I saw the sky and came home to find the roads cordoned off by the police," she added

Anne Graham, also 56, said: "It was terrible. I thought the sun had come out, then my husband phoned and said 'Do you see?'

"I couldn't believe it. I stood on a nearby hill and could feel the heat on my face."

Officers from the Scottish Environment Protection Agency have visited the site and said no significant air or water pollution problems had been identified and no long-term environmental damage was anticipated.

Strathclyde Police said about 1,500 to 1,700 tons of the nitrocellulose had been involved in the incident.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/glasgow_and_west/6985785.stm

USA, TX, GALVESTON CO, FRIENDSWOOD

SEPTEMBER 11 2007.

GALLONS OF OIL SPILL INTO COWARDS CREEK

Sara McDonald

Four fire departments worked Monday to contain about 1,000 gallons of oil that spilled into Cowards Creek in Friendswood near the Galveston-Brazoria county line.

The oil, diluted by rainwater, leaked from an older oil storage tank, Friendswood Fire Marshal Terry Byrd said.

Byrd said most of the oil was contained near the leaking tank near Mora Way. He said that by 4:15 p.m., almost three hours after the oil was first reported in the creek, some of the slick was spotted in spots further down the creek. Further down, water had an oily sheen to it.

Workers set up booms to prevent the oil from spreading near the bridge at FM 518, where a small amount

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of the oil had spread to, Byrd said.

Friendswood public works employees delivered dirt and sand to isolate the spill. Traffic on Castlewood Drive between Merrywood Drive and Cedarwood Drive was rerouted to give the emergency vehicles room to work. City spokesman Nick Haby said the roads could still be closed early this morning.

Firefighters from Alvin, Pearland, Texas City and Friendswood worked on containing the spill for more than three hours.

<http://news.galvestondailynews.com/story.lasso?ewcd=8dea23c74b12eccc>

USA, CA, MARTINEZ SEPTEMBER 12 2007.

MARTINEZ: OVERFILLED TANK THE CAUSE OF 4,000-GALLON GAS SPILL

Initial reports indicate that a 4,000-gallon gasoline spill in Martinez Saturday occurred when a storage tank was overfilled, causing material to leak out through the facility's ventilation system into a secondary containment area, Contra Costa Hazardous Materials Director Randy Sawyer said.

Although the facility is near Suisun Bay, the secondary containment area was designed to prevent potential leaks from escaping into the waterway. Reports of whether any material could have escaped were not available today.

One employee was taken to a nearby hospital for evaluation after being splashed with gasoline, Sawyer said. There was no word on whether the employee was harmed. No other injuries were reported.

Hazardous materials crews monitored the air downwind from the spill, but did not detect any elevated levels of hydrocarbons or other toxins that could harm the public, Sawyer said.

The spill occurred at the bulk storage facility on located at 2801 Waterfront Road near Waterbird Way at about 2:30 p.m. Saturday, Contra Costa Fire Protection District officials said.

Although the gasoline was contained within the secondary containment area, the facility was evacuated and Waterfront Road was closed for several hours.

The main concern was that the gasoline would ignite, Sawyer said, but luckily no fires were reported.

Pacific Atlantic, LLC will be required to submit a 72-hour report on the spill, detailing how it happened and what the response was.

A spokesman for Pacific Atlantic, LLC did not immediately return phone calls.

http://cbs5.com/localwire/localnews/bcn/2007/09/11/n/HeadlineNews/GAS-SPILL/resources_bcn.html

IRELAND, CO MAYO, WESTPORT SEPTEMBER 12 2007.

NO DAMAGE AFTER CASTLEBAR DIESEL SPILL

Anton McNulty

Up to 50 litres of diesel spilled into the Castlebar river last week but the North Western Regional Fisheries Board (NWRFB) said they were satisfied that no permanent damage was caused to the ecology of the river.

The incident occurred last Tuesday when a fuel tank in a commercial business was being refilled with diesel, some of which spilled into the overflow tank. The diesel seeped from a crack in the bottom of the tank and went into the river. The trace of diesel was noticed on Tuesday evening when Mayo County Council were notified and began a clean-up operation.

The NWRFB were notified on Wednesday morning and Stephen Melia, Environment Officer with the NWRFB, told The Mayo News that around 50 litres of diesel seeped from the tank into the river. He said that he requested that the contaminated soil be removed and asked that fuel in the shallow areas and at bends be removed as a matter of critical importance.

"The diesel spill may impact on the insect life and on birds in the river if it gets caught in their feathers. There are otters in the river too and it could have an impact on their waterproof coat, but there does not appear to be any evidence of that yet and we hope there was no serious impact. It is important the diesel flow was stopped quickly and they used absorbent buns to soak up the diesel.

"Generally it went into a section of the river that is not patrolled as there is no spawning and the crack may have developed over time and would not have been noticed until now. However, all premises along the river should check that their fuel tanks are in order. The site is being cleaned up and we are satisfied there has been no environmental impact," he said.

Mr Melia added that while the river is located in an urban area with a lot of construction development there

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has only been an isolated number of incidents where silt has discharged into the river and, in general, the water quality is good.

Beverly Flynn TD called for a full report into the circumstances of the spillage and queried what censures are to be imposed on those who caused it.

http://www.mayonews.ie/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2368&Itemid=38

USA, ILL, CARM

SEPTEMBER 12 2007.

AIR TANK EXPLOSION INJURES FOUR MEN AT O'DANIEL PLANT

Braden Willis

A portable air tank explosion at the O'Daniel Trucking Co. plant west of Carmi injured four men around 5:10 p.m. Monday.

The men were identified by company officials (co-owners John Mann and Bill Edwards) and a White County Sheriff's Office incident report as Robert Davis, 41, Rosiclare, Jamie Owen, 43, Burnt Prairie, Paul Stanley, age unavailable (though officials said he was a young man who had just started working for the company), Carmi, and David R. Whitley, 54, Enfield.

According to information gathered at the scene and from sheriff's office reports, the men were working on a portable air tank that was thought to belong to one of them. One of the men had welded shut a hole in the tank and was pressurizing the tank to test it when it exploded.

Owen suffered a severe injury to his lower left leg and was airlifted from the scene to Deaconess Hospital in Evansville, Ind. Sheriff's deputies closed Illinois 14 for some time Monday evening so the helicopter could land and evacuate the injured man.

The other three men were taken by local ambulances to Hamilton Memorial Hospital in McLeansboro, where Davis was subsequently transferred by helicopter to an Evansville hospital. Davis reportedly suffered severe shrapnel wounds to his face. The other two men were less severely injured.

The explosion occurred inside the main shop area of the facility at 645 E. Illinois 14. Davis was employed as a mechanic at the facility. The other men's job descriptions were not immediately known.

<http://www.carmitimes.com/articles/2007/09/11/news/news1.txt>

USA, IN, GARY

SEPTEMBER 12 2007.

GASOLINE SPILL IS CAUSE OF FIRE THAT KILLED TWO

Piet Levy and Andy Grimm

Firefighters now know the tragic details of an East Chicago fire that killed Crystal Thompson, 39, and her 9-year-old son, Ricardo Mathis, Jr.

Mathis, Jr. spilled gasoline on himself while his mother was cooking dinner.

The fire broke out Friday near the apartment's only entrance.

A mandatory rope ladder was not installed at the building for the apartment's seven occupants to make a proper escape.

A canister filled with gasoline, used for a generator kept on the apartment's back porch, was being stored in the kitchen, said East Chicago Fire Chief Valeriano Gomez.

"[Mathis Jr.] apparently opened the can and somehow splashed himself," Gomez said.

The vapors on Mathis, Jr. ignited from the nearby flames on the stove.

The boy dropped the container, spilling more gasoline, and "boom, the fire spread rapidly," Gomez said.

Shoepprints indicate Thompson grabbed her burning son and rushed him to the bathroom to douse the flames, Gomez said. That's where they were found.

Mathis, Jr.'s entire front body was burned, Gomez said, and his lungs were scorched from breathing in the intense heat. The mother died from heavy smoke inhalation.

Thompson's daughter, 19-year-old Marie, and her 3-year-old son Michael Story, were sent to a Chicago area hospital. Three girls, ages 7, 9 and 14, were treated at local hospitals.

Firefighter Paul Russell suffered a back injury during the rescue attempt, but was helping at the scene later that evening, Gomez said. Mathis Jr.'s father, Ricardo Mathis, Sr., wasn't home when the fire broke out.

He said the couple and their five children had moved into the apartment a little over a month ago, and had

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been using the generator for power.

They were unable to get NIPSCO service because of delinquent bills at their previous apartment.

City Building Department Director Ernie Hagler said smoke detectors had been installed and damage to a chimney had been repaired after city inspectors found deficiencies in a January inspection.

Tenants or landlords are supposed to ask for an inspection before an apartment can be occupied, but Hagler said city officials believed the second-floor apartment was vacant.

City codes would prohibit the storage of gasoline inside a house or putting a generator on a wooden deck, Hagler said.

Visitation for Thompson and Mathis is set for 11 a.m. Wednesday at Divinity Funeral Home, 3831 Main in East Chicago, with funeral services at 1 p.m.

The pair will be buried at Fern Oak Cemetery in Griffith.

<http://www.post-trib.com/news/551132,ecfirefolo.article>

USA, CA, MARTINEZ

SEPTEMBER 14 2007.

MARTINEZ: MORE THAN 10,000 GALLONS GAS SPILLED FROM TANKS SUNDAY

More than twice the amount of gasoline as was originally reported spilled from two Pacific Atlantic Terminals, LLC tanks Sunday in Martinez, according to a report the company issued Wednesday.

The company originally estimated that 4,000 gallons of gasoline had spilled, but new estimates place the amount closer to 250 barrels, or 10,500 gallons.

The 72-hour report, which is required by Contra Costa Health Services for incidents involving serious hazardous materials releases, also stated that while most of the gasoline was caught in a secondary containment area, a small amount -- about 5 to 10 gallons -- did escape from the facility. Contaminated soil has since been removed, according to the report.

The spill occurred at about 2:15 p.m. Sunday at the Pacific Atlantic Terminals facility at 2801 Waterfront Road. Two of the facility's aboveground tanks storage tanks reportedly overflowed into the vapor-control lines and gasoline spilled out onto the ground, the company reported.

Officials from the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, the Martinez Police Department, Contra Costa Health Services, the California Department of Fish and Game and the California Highway Patrol responded to the spill.

Hazardous materials crews monitored the air downwind from the spill, but did not detect any elevated levels of hydrocarbons or other toxins that could harm the public, Contra Costa Hazardous Materials Director Randy Sawyer said.

One of the company's employees was sent to the hospital for treatment of gasoline inhalation and skin irritation. According to the report, the employee was released the same day and returned to work.

Meanwhile, crews closed Waterfront Road to traffic, and shut down valves and pumps at the facility.

Some gasoline was removed from the tanks to relieve the pressure and a vacuum truck was used to suck the spilled gasoline up from the ground. Contaminated soil was removed from the area, according to the report.

The company is continuing to investigate the incident and will be required to submit a 30-day report to Contra Costa Health Services detailing how the incident occurred and what measures the company plans to take to prevent similar incidents from happening in the future.

http://cbs5.com/localwire/localnews/bcn/2007/09/13/n/HeadlineNews/GAS-SPILL/resources_bcn.html

USA, NY, BROOKLYN

SEPTEMBER 15 2007.

BREATHLESS IN BROOKLYN: OIL SPILLS IN OUR BACKYARD

Frank Koughan

Basil Seggos leans against the rail of the 36-foot harbor patrol boat as it chugs along Newtown Creek into an industrial wasteland of sewer pipes and flotsam, past a huge conveyor belt carrying skeletal cars to the scrap heap and a natural gas facility belching plumes of orange flame. A gentle headwind conveys the odors one at a time: salt, sewage, sulfur, and then the powerful stench of petroleum. "You can really smell it before you can see it," Seggos, the chief investigator for the environmental watchdog Riverkeeper, says, pointing to a black metal bulkhead along the south bank. The boat draws closer, and a purple sheen appears on the surface. "That's all oil," he says. It's the bleeding edge of an environmental disaster, one of the largest oil spills in the world.

Tank and Petroleum Use Mishaps

The discharge floating on this inland waterway, which divides the boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens, is just a hint at what lies beneath—anywhere between 17 million and 30 million gallons' worth, a spill more than 50 percent larger than the Exxon Valdez. But unlike the Exxon Valdez, this one has been allowed to grow and fester for half a century, directly below a residential area. Even in the neighborhood—an old-time blue-collar community pocked with hipster enclaves—many people don't know why the air smells like gasoline on rainy days.

"This is a working-class community with a dirty creek in a part of Brooklyn no one really cares about," Seggos says. "It would have perhaps been a better thing if these were river otters covered with oil. You'd have had immediate action."

No one's really sure how long the oil has been there, but most people point to a massive explosion that ripped through the city's sewer system in 1950, raining manhole covers down on the populace. City officials blamed gasoline leaking from what was then Mobil's Brooklyn refinery. Mobil denied it. That was pretty much the extent of the investigation, and for a couple of decades the oil quietly continued to drip into the soil and groundwater under the refinery, spreading beneath the neighborhood and oozing—a tenth of an inch every hour—toward the bank of Newtown Creek.

In 1978, a Coast Guard helicopter spotted an oil slick on the creek. Investigating further, the Guard discovered the 55-acre monster that had by then massed beneath the city. Chemical analysis fingered Mobil as the source, and again the company said it wasn't at fault. By now, Mobil had sold part of the refinery to Amoco and was using the rest for storage tanks. A few blocks away, a Texaco subsidiary also had a storage facility. The companies (now known as ExxonMobil, BP, and Chevron, respectively) pointed fingers at each other; government agencies, sensing that this was not a rumble they wanted to be involved in, did the same.

The Coast Guard, having spent half a million dollars investigating the spill, decided it had done enough; the case was turned over to the state of New York, which wanted no part of it either. Believing that the spill, while regrettable, posed no immediate hazard (no one drank the groundwater anymore, and the manhole-launching explosions had long ago subsided), officials decided not to apply their recently established oil spill fund to what was by far the state's largest oil spill, on the grounds that the spill predated the fund. So the buck was handed down to New York City—which, still reeling from its financial near-meltdown in the 1970s, chose not to do battle with a brace of oil company lawyers. For a decade, nothing happened. And the oil lake quietly grew.

"You become something of a stink connoisseur when you live in Greenpoint," says Teresa Toro, who lives two blocks from Newtown Creek. The neighborhood features rows of meticulously kept houses, manicured parks, and cafés catering to an influx of ex-Manhattanites, but it also remains the location of choice for projects that would never be placed along Fifth Avenue: sewage treatment, waste transfer, natural gas storage. For Toro, the oil fumes are the worst. "When the wind is just right, I can smell it blowing off the creek. Sometimes we can't open our windows.

"The [sewage treatment] plant people get very defensive when you call up and complain about the smell," Toro laughs. "They say, 'That's not us! It's the spill!'" But then she turns serious. "Every time I go to the creek, I just get so angry," she says. "I feel like I'm watching a crime in progress."

Local lore holds that it was the Valdez crash that finally shamed the state into action in 1990. "Not at all," says Joseph Lentol, the neighborhood's state assemblyman since 1972. The truth, he says, is worse: In 1988, Mobil had another leak—35,000 gallons—and felt the need to notify the city that, by the way, there happened to be 17 million gallons more underneath. The state's Department of Environmental Conservation began negotiating a consent order forcing Mobil to clean up its mess.

The deal, in the end, required no monetary damages, set no firm benchmarks for progress, and demanded removal of the oil floating on top of the groundwater but not of the contaminated soil. It also gave Mobil a powerful tool for staving off litigation—the company was, after all, complying with a government-mandated cleanup. "A consent decree is nothing more than another word for a plea bargain," says Lentol. "It was a slap on the wrist."

As time wore on, the people of Greenpoint would come to revile the environment department as much as, if not more than, the oil company itself. At least they weren't paying Mobil executives' salaries. A spokeswoman for the department, Maureen Wren, says the consent decree should be viewed in light of "the information available at that time" and that the state has always been committed to holding the company responsible. But by the time another decade had gone by, ExxonMobil and the other oil companies had removed less than 8 million gallons. There was no reason for them to pick up the pace. Until Riverkeeper showed up.

"We found out about it by stumbling across it, literally," Seggos says, recalling how he noticed the sheen on the water one day in 2002, while floating along Newtown Creek to educate immigrants about the dangers of fishing there. He assigned an intern to look into it and was soon presented with a fantastic-sounding story about a

Tank and Petroleum Use Mishaps

17-million-gallon-plus underground lake of oil. "I said, 'You idiot! What the hell are you talking about? Go back and do more research!'" After almost another year of investigation, Seggos approached the state to see if Riverkeeper—a small, 41-year-old environmental group whose top attorney is Robert Kennedy Jr.—could help apply pressure on ExxonMobil. "They totally blew us off," he says.

In 2004, Riverkeeper notified the environment department that it planned to sue ExxonMobil, BP, and Chevron on behalf of a half-dozen local residents (including Teresa Toro). The suit sought no damages, only a proper cleanup. But behind the scenes, Seggos had begun laying the groundwork for a major toxic tort suit, facilitating a series of sometimes-awkward meetings between out-of-town trial lawyers and reticent locals. "It's a very difficult community to penetrate," he says.

That got a lot easier in the summer of 2005, when results of vapor tests Seggos had commissioned came back showing dangerous levels of explosive methane gas and benzene, a carcinogen. The neighborhood erupted as if the oil itself had been set ablaze. People who had long believed the spill to be merely a foul-smelling nuisance now began tallying the community's sick and its dead.

"It's up to 35 or 36 people that I know that have had cancer just on this block," says Tom Stagg, a retired detective who's lived near the spill his whole life. Sitting at his kitchen table, he rattles off the list: his mother, father, stepfather, his neighbor's wife, a friend of his daughter's, his pal Joey, a nine-year-old kid a couple streets over. "It's too many," he says. "Too many people."

Jane Pedota lives directly above the spill. A couple of her neighbors, she says, have exactly the same pancreatic problems; another neighbor has died of a brain tumor, and his wife died of myelofibrosis, a cancer linked to benzene. "I'm telling you, you're seeing odd things," Pedota says. "Too coincidental for me."

By the end of the year, the lawyers Seggos had brought in, Girardi & Keese—of Erin Brockovich fame—filed suit against the oil companies. Stagg and Pedota signed on. Brockovich herself showed up to rally the residents.

By the time the environment department convened a public meeting last year, the neighborhood had built up a full head of steam. Hundreds packed the Princess Manor banquet hall to hear presentations by ExxonMobil, BP, and Chevron, hectoring company representatives with catcalls of "liar!" and "shame on you people!" A health department spokesman tried to reassure the crowd, saying the state was unaware of any health threat but acknowledging that no studies had been done and none were planned. When state officials announced the cleanup would last another 20 years or more, the room fell silent.

That April, Riverkeeper obtained internal ExxonMobil documents showing that the company had known of high levels of benzene and other chemicals a decade earlier, when the substances were detected in a commercial property just 1,000 feet from the Pedota household. (ExxonMobil spokesman Brian Dunphy told Mother Jones that the tests, which were not conducted by the company, aren't proof of a health threat.)

The pressure continued to build until June 2006, when the talks between the environment department and ExxonMobil imploded (neither side will say why), whereupon the state finally referred the case to then-Attorney General Eliot Spitzer. Days later, Congress approved funding for a full EPA study of the spill, the federal government's first involvement in the case since the Coast Guard sailed away in 1979.

In February, Spitzer's successor, Andrew Cuomo, announced that his office intended to sue ExxonMobil (he filed the suit in July) to force a speedy cleanup. But the threat of litigation seemed to have the opposite effect. ExxonMobil shut down its groundwater pumps, which had been sucking up oil at a rate of 1,110 gallons per day, slowing the cleanup to a near halt. At the direction of the environment department, the company restarted the pumps this summer; the various lawsuits facing ExxonMobil remain ongoing. "I told my kids, 'This won't be settled until I'm dead and gone,'" says Pedota—who, like everyone else on her block, flies the Stars and Stripes in front of her house all year long. "But it would be nice to see that you could raise your children here." As she spoke, the oil beneath her home continued to creep, a tenth of an inch per hour, toward the creek.

<http://www.motherjones.com/commentary/columns/2007/09/witness.html>

USA, AL, ANCHORAGE

SEPTEMBER 16 2007.

ERODING SHORELINE THREATENS TO TOPPLE ALASKA FUEL TANKS

U.S. Coast Guard personnel are monitoring fuel storage tanks in Kivalina that may become damaged due to heavy rain, 35 knot winds and nine foot seas eroding soil on the nearby coast.

Presently, the fuel tanks containing about 240,000 gallons of diesel fuel and gasoline are just 30 feet from the shore.

Tank and Petroleum Use Mishaps

Village crews are working steadily to fill and strategically place sandbags to maintain the seawall on the ocean side of Kivalina

Coast Guard Sector Anchorage is preparing a response to prevent an oil spill should it become necessary. Some response equipment is pre-staged by the storage facility, Alaska Village Electrical Cooperative.

Other residents have evacuated to Red Dog Mine about 16 miles away. Fewer than 400 people reside in Kivalina, which is located at the tip of an eight-mile barrier reef located between the Chukchi Sea and Kivalina River.

Village elders say 50 years ago the ocean coast was 1.5 miles from Kivalina.

The shoreline at Kivalina is being eroded by the surf and storm conditions serve to accelerate the decay.

In previous years the annual ice edge formation protected the village shore from savage winter storms, but as of September 13, 2007 the ice edge had not formed below the Bering Strait.

<http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/sep2007/2007-09-14-096.asp>

USA, NEBRASKA, OMAHA

SEPTEMBER 17 2007.

ETHANOL FIRES POSE UNIQUE CHALLENGES

Odd thing about an ethanol fire. The alcohol burns so clear, you can't see the flame in daytime similar to fires that occur with race cars running on ethanol. Nor can an ethanol fire be extinguished by water. Dousing it with water would actually cause the fire to spread, so a special foam is required to put out the blaze.

With ethanol as one of the fastest growing industries in the Midwest, emergency responders have been beefing up their training and coordinating with plants so that they can be better prepared.

Nebraska has 17 ethanol plants, 10 more under construction and others in the works. By the end of 2007, it's expected to be the No. 2 ethanol producing state in the nation.

By state law, emergency preparedness, including firefighting, is a local responsibility. Officials say assessing Nebraska's readiness to fight ethanol fires has to be done community by community.

"It's probably safe to say that based upon where ethanol plants are located across the state, firefighting capabilities will vary," said Al Berndt, assistant director of the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency.

Fire departments can turn to each other for aid or ask the state for help if they become overmatched, Berndt said.

Ten strategically located fire departments have received special hazardous materials training and equipment to expedite assistance for a variety of scenarios, he said.

Joe Hanson, who handles training for the State Fire Marshal's Office, said he has received numerous calls from local fire officials about training.

Firefighters are learning about the unique aspects of ethanol fires, touring the plants and collaborating with ethanol manufacturers to stockpile the foam needed to suppress fires, he said.

Additionally, no ethanol plant can open until it gains approval from the Fire Marshal's Office, said Jim Heine, assistant state fire marshal.

Emergency officials say they had not heard of volunteer fire departments having problems affording the cost of fighting ethanol fires.

"From my dealings, the ethanol producers want to be good neighbors and work with local fire departments to provide training and support," said Bill Lundy, a volunteer member of the York Fire Department and secretary-treasurer of the Nebraska State Volunteer Firefighters Association.

Free training sessions are under way this month. Federal, state and local emergency responders, as well as industry representatives, have participated in the sessions. On Thursday and Friday the training program stopped in Lincoln. This week it will visit Omaha.

A pure ethanol fire, especially in daylight, can be difficult to see, said Todd Campbell, an Environmental Protection Agency official who has taken the training. Sometimes, firefighters will only see heat waves from the fire.

Local officials cannot recall a major ethanol fire in Nebraska, though such fires have been reported in other states, usually involving the transport of ethanol.

Todd Sneller, administrator of the Nebraska Ethanol Board, said safety is being addressed across a number of venues.

Tank and Petroleum Use Mishaps

"We can't make any guarantees," he said. "We don't want to lull ourselves into complacency, but we don't want to be alarmist either."

<http://www.firefightingnews.com/article-US.cfm?articleID=37923>

USA, NC, CHARLOTTE

SEPTEMBER 18 2007.

APPARENT GAS TANK EXPLOSION NEAR HOSPITAL

The excavation of an old underground gas tank near Presbyterian Hospital caused an apparent explosion Monday afternoon that shook nearby buildings and could be felt several blocks away.

The Charlotte Fire Department reports it responded to the corner of Hawthorne Lane and Elizabeth Lane, where an old gas station was being redeveloped.

Witnesses say a worker was using a backhoe to dig out the giant underground gas tank when they heard a loud boom. Several people inside Presbyterian Hospital rushed outside to see what had happened and reported seeing black smoke.

Part of Hawthorne Lane was temporarily closed because part of the gas cylinder had blown into the road. The worker on the backhoe suffered a minor injury, but no one else was hurt.

"I heard a big boom and my condo is like 4 or 5 blocks away and I looked outside to see what it was, but couldn't see anything," said a woman who lives nearby. "But it felt like my entire complex shook."

Employees at a Burger King nearby also reported that they felt their building shake. And at Elizabeth Traditional Elementary, teachers and students were in the bus lot when they heard an explosion and the ground shook. The buses were routed around the closed section of Hawthorne Lane.

<http://www.wcnc.com/news/topstories/stories/wcnc-091707-kr-g-explosion.e2fa28ff.html>

CANADA, YUKON, WHITEHORSE

SEPTEMBER 19 2007.

TANK TO BE REMOVED AFTER HEATING FUEL POLLUTES RIVER

Chuck Tobin

Heating oil leaking into the Yukon River was noticed Monday after a complaint was received of fuel and water flowing along a downtown alley, says a government spokesman.

Dennis Senger of the Department of Environment said today a boom was placed on the river to capture what he described as a minor sheen flowing out of the Strickland Street storm drain.

The boom remains in place today, with just a faint trace of oil products visible.

The RCMP detachment was notified of the fuel oil running down the alley by an anonymous caller at 11 a.m. Monday. Police then contacted the oil spill line, Senger said.

He said an unknown volume of oil had originated from an underground tank buried in the alleyway between Third and Second avenues.

The tank is attached to an older and vacant Third Avenue building next to Super Valu, and across the alley from the NAPA Auto Parts building.

The combination of oil and water from heavy rainfall was flowing into the storm drain running along Third, Senger said.

The Whitehorse Fire Department was called in to assist with the initial containment and cleanup of the surface residue, and the storm sewer catchments were pumped out into containers by city staff.

Senger said the owner of the building, Klaas Heynen, has contracted EBA Engineering to oversee the site investigation and removal of the tank, as well as Arctic Backhoe to do the digging.

"We also received information from the owner's son that the building has not been used for 20 years, nor has the tank."

It appears at some point in the past the filler spout had either been broken off at ground level, or had been placed at ground level originally, and the filler cap was faulty or somehow had been removed, he said.

Senger said it's believed the tank began filling up with precipitation over time and overflowed in recent days because of the heavy rainfall.

Once the tank is removed, department officials will have a clearer picture, he said.

There is nothing, he added, to suggest vandalism or anything untoward that may have led to the leaking fuel.

Senger said officials do not suspect any underground leaking from the tank, as evidence would have likely

Tank and Petroleum Use Mishaps

appeared in the city's storm sewer system prior to Monday.

The removal of the tank has been complicated by the presence of three or four large electrical conduits running directly beside the tank, if not slightly over top.

Senger said Yukon Electrical Co. Ltd. has rerouted the power. It was his understanding this morning that Yukon Electrical and Arctic Backhoe were discussing the tank's removal.

<http://www.whitehorsestar.com/auth.php?r=48544>

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, PORT-OF-SPAIN

SEPTEMBER 20 2007.

2 INJURED IN OIL TANK EXPLOSION

Richard Charan

A tiny spark is believed to have triggered an oil storage tank explosion that burned two men at a Petrotrin facility in Siparia.

Oil contract workers Roland Seechan, 42, and Aaron Jairam, 20, were listed in a serious but stable condition at the San Fernando General last night.

Communications manager of state-owned oil company Petrotrin, Arnold Corneal, said the burns were not considered life threatening.

The explosion on Tuesday evening was similar in many ways to one that occurred in the Guapo, Palo Seco oilfields six months ago, when five men were horribly burned.

The five had been servicing an oil rig in Palo Seco, when a flame or lighted cigarette sparked a natural gas explosion, it is believed.

The men ran a mile, helping one another rip off burning boots and clothing.

It took them two hours before getting help. Workers at another oil installation took them to hospital.

One of the men, Dave Namdeo, 25, died a week later.

In Tuesday's incident, Jairam and Seechan, both of Penal, were luckier. There were half a dozen other workers close by when it happened.

The men work for Trincan Oil Limited, based at Coora Road, Siparia. At nightfall, Jairam, an electrician, was installing a floodlight so that the crew could work on the facility, known as Tank 7, on the Coora/Quinam Road.

It is believed that flammable vapours in the tank ignited. The burning men were rescued by co-workers.

Both suffered first and second degree burns to the face, arms and legs. The tank was scorched to a height of 20 feet.

Seechan was reported to be the more seriously injured. He was in the Intensive Care Unit last night.

His brother Prem said: "He is talking but slowly. He is burned real bad, and we don't know how he will do."

Corneal said in a statement that fire fighters and paramedics responded and the injured men were taken to the Gulf View Medical Centre, La Romaine, and transferred to the Burns Unit at the San Fernando General Hospital.

Corneal said the company had high health and safety standards that all lease operators had to follow, and that the company "cannot be everywhere all the time".

The explosion is being investigated by Petrotrin and officials of the Energy Ministry and the Occupational Safety and Health agency.

http://www.trinidadexpress.com/index.pl/article_news?id=161205707

SOUTH AFRICA, DURBAN

SEPTEMBER 21 2007.

DURBAN INFERNO: RESIDENTS FLEE

Heinz De Boer and Ayanda Mhlongo

A Durban pensioner sat huddled under blankets on a damp pavement as police vehicles, equipped with loud hailer's, ordered the final evacuation of surrounding homes on the Bluff on Tuesday night.

Around her, anxious people, some clutching their pets or children, ran to their homes where they gathered a few precious belongings before joining other frantic people who clogged roads in the rush to leave the area.

The light from the flames of an enormous fire that had engulfed part of Durban's harbour shone on their confused faces.

Tank and Petroleum Use Mishaps

This was just some of the human drama that unfolded on Tuesday night when hundreds of Bluff and Island View residents were evacuated from their homes as noxious smoke from a massive solvent fire at the Island View Storage facility coated the region.

Although authorities were claiming their evacuation plan was a success, a row erupted on Wednesday morning when community leaders criticised the city's emergency planning procedure, saying that residents of the area did not know about an emergency evacuation plan.

Dozens of specialist firefighters of the eThekweni Fire and Emergency Services, together with fire specialists and chemical engineers, grappled with a towering inferno of flames.

Police buses and dozens of Metro Police vehicles helped move people living near Island View and parts of Bluff Road to nearby churches and shopping malls, where temporary disaster management centres had been established. Other people were seen hastily loading suitcases and their pets into bakkies before joining a stream of cars leaving the area.

The drama began on Tuesday evening at 7pm when residents heard a series of explosions that rattled windows and shook the foundations of some buildings.

Minutes later, dozens of fuel tankers raced away from the storage facility as at least six storage pods containing thousands of cubic metres of solvents exploded into the night air, spewing out a toxic cloud of smog. It is believed that a tanker first caught alight before the blaze spread to the nearby storage tankers. Firefighters battled for more than four hours to bring the blaze under control.

Speaking to the media, Island View Storage managing director Kobus Ehlers said he did not know what caused the fire, nor what chemicals were in the tanks, but was confident fumes from the fire did not pose a health hazard.

"Obviously, forensic investigations will be conducted to determine what caused all of this."

It was believed that two of the tanks contained solvents and the third lubricant oil.

It was understood firefighters were letting the tanks "burn out". By 1am, most of the billowing smoke visible earlier on had dissipated and only a small plume and a little flame could still be seen.

An emergency response plan for the Island View Complex involving Durban Metro, Transnet National Ports Authority Fire and Emergency Services and Ambulance Services was immediately activated when the fire broke out.

Vessels at Island View berths were removed as a safety precaution. Also evacuated were 100 residents on the Bluff, immediately bordering the depot, but they were allowed back to their homes later.

Reverend Alvin Sigamoney, of St Barnabas Church, said scores of people sought refuge at the church, mostly men and women with their children and a few pets. A lot of them were very concerned about the toxic effects of the blast.

Although people were concerned about their safety, the consensus was that the evacuation would only last for the night.

Sigamoney said the church was concerned at the apparent lack of an emergency evacuation plan for the area.

"The church was only used as an evacuation centre after we approached emergency services and offered our help. At no point were we approached by the police to help."

Radio broadcasts then urged people to seek refuge at the church. Sigamoney said those in the church were given tea and coffee and were made as comfortable as possible. He said people went back to their homes after 2am, but only after the reverend and his clergy phoned police to inquire if the situation had returned to normal.

South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA) chairman Desmond D'sa also said that the city's evacuation plan lacked organisation.

"Residents were standing around the streets in shock, not knowing where to go," he said. It took three hours before they even thought of evacuating people.

"The SDCEA has been asking the city for the past 11 years to set up a disaster management plan. The city manager Dr Mike Sutcliffe and the National Ports Authority should be held responsible," he said.

City manager Dr Mike Sutcliffe denies that any chaos was experienced during last night's fire. "I would like to commend our emergency services for doing such an excellent job. We worked out which people were in a dangerous area and got them evacuated timeously and safely."

He also said that the community was aware of what to do in a situation such as last night's inferno.

"There is no point in just telling people to leave and then you have traffic jams and emergency services that can't get through. As it took place at night, people could see it from very far so they thought it was much closer than

Tank and Petroleum Use Mishaps

it actually was. I think the city handled it in a very orderly manner," said Sutcliffe.

A Bluff resident, Ivan Raimbault, said his house, which overlooks the depot, shook with the first blast. This was followed 10 minutes later by another explosion and five minutes afterwards by a third blast.

Among those who witnessed the inferno were Steven and Jolene Scharneck, who were at the time of the evacuation still trying to find a place to stay.

With their home only a few hundred metres from the fire, the Stott Road family said there had been chaos after the first explosions.

"It sounded like a bomb going off. We just saw this ball of flames that looked almost like an atomic bomb had exploded and the air was filled with the smell of burnt chemicals," they said.

The fire department confirmed that two tanks were still alight, but that fire crews were allowing the solvents to burn off in a controlled manner. No injuries were reported.

Early on Wednesday morning, the situation around Island View Storage appeared to have returned to normal.

http://www.int.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=14&art_id=vn20070919093113427C968225

UK, READING

SEPTEMBER 21 2007.

GAS MAY HAVE KILLED MEN IN 18 MINUTES

Three men found dead in a storage container at the Kennet Island development could have been gassed to death in just 18 minutes, an inquest heard.

Tilers Kirpal Singh, 30, his cousin Manjit Singh, 35, and 21-year-old Gurdeep Singh Deo died on December 21, 2006.

The men, who were found at 8am on December 22, had all inhaled fatal levels of carbon monoxide and a post mortem examination revealed their blood and tissues had been starved of oxygen.

Pictures taken at the scene of their death in a metal storage container, showed the men lying on the floor with their work boots off.

At yesterday's inquest at the civic centre, Reading coroner Peter Bedford guessed the three workers may have been resting or napping.

A petrol-run generator was being used inside the container to fuel two lamps, probably for heat and light.

The days leading up to their deaths had been very cold but it was very dangerous to use a generator in such an enclosed space, Mr Bedford said.

One of the workers' colleagues, plumber Simon Moore, warned Kirpal Singh, known as Pali, of this just before he died.

Mr Moore told the inquest: "I said to him, 'you should not have it [the generator] running like that because the fumes will kill you'. He said, 'yeah, but it's cold'."

He added: "I do not know why they were in there because it was freezing cold."

The inquest heard it was not typical of workers to eat or rest in the containers.

But CCTV footage from lunchtime on December 21 revealed the men walking away with food from the site canteen in the direction of the container.

Another colleague, Jon Bullet, said he often saw Pali and his fellow tilers rest in the container.

The inquest was told he heard the generator running in the container at around 1.30pm but he did not hear it later at 3pm.

When forensic experts examined the generator, which was in fine working order, they found it had not run out of petrol, but was not still running.

Karen Morris, from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), said: "The reason it stopped was because the atmosphere was starved of oxygen."

Tests were carried out on the generator following the deaths.

In an area the same dimension as the container – six-metres high, 2.4-metres wide and 2.4-metres deep – a generator took just 80 minutes to burn out.

But the inquest heard it took just 18 minutes for dangerous levels of carbon monoxide to engulf the atmosphere.

It is unknown exactly when the men died, but it was probably sometime during the afternoon of December 21, Mr Bedford said.

Pali had worked at the site, developed by St James Homes, since March 2006.

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He contracted the other men to work with him and it was not known if they had completed a safety induction course.

John Streak, construction director at St James, and Michael Holt, senior site manager, found the bodies.

They were called after Pali's boss and friend Iqbal Dhaliwal became concerned about their whereabouts.

An ambulance was called and the men were pronounced dead at 8.15am on December 22. Police said there were no suspicious circumstances.

The jury, of six woman and four men, took about 30 minutes to reach a verdict of misadventure.

Following the verdict Mr Dhaliwal, who had known Pali for about four years, said: "He was very confident. He was very understanding and trustworthy.

"His family are not doing good."

http://www.getreading.co.uk/news/2014/2014624/gas_may_have_killed_men_in_18_minutes