

3<sup>rd</sup> November 2011

---

## Protests force closure of Oakland port

The Occupy Oakland protesters' call for a general strike yesterday largely fizzled out as organisers failed to rally significant support from unions, but protesters brought operations at the Port of Oakland to a halt, reported The Wall Street Journal.

Maritime operations at the port, one of the biggest container ports in the US, were "effectively shut down" yesterday by demonstrators, said port officials. They added they would resume work "when it is safe and secure to do so."

Occupy Oakland, the West Coast's most volatile branch of the Occupy Wall Street movement, said on its website that it was "asking all workers to go on strike, call a vacation day or simply walk off the job." Last week, demonstrators and police clashed in violent skirmishes that caught international attention.

But relatively few workers headed the strike call, raising questions about the breadth of the movement's support.

Police estimated a crowd of about 3,000 had gathered at the Port of Oakland by about 5 pm. Some had marched from the city's downtown, while others had been bused to the port.

Although Oakland Mayor Jean Quan gave permission to most city employees to observe the strike call if they wanted, spokeswoman Karen Boyd said few of the 4,000 workers did.

About 40 Port of Oakland workers didn't show up at the largest hiring hall for the 325 daily jobs, said Craig Merrilees, a spokesman for the International Longshore and Warehouse Union's national headquarters in San Francisco. Port officials said they closed their administrative offices early as a precaution. Some marine terminals planned to close early as well.

Some protesters in the city broke windows of banks and businesses and spray-painted slogans on ATMs. Many stores near City Hall were shut. At the University of California headquarters, officials asked the approximately 1,300 employees to work from home in case of transit troubles.

Organised labour mostly participated in the strike call by showing moral support for the Occupy protesters, said Josie Camacho, executive secretary treasurer of the Alameda Labor Council, an umbrella group for local unions.

3<sup>rd</sup> November 2011

---

---

## Exploding Containers Being Investigated

An explosion in a reefer container serviced by a repair yard last month in Qingdao, Vietnam has led to 82 such containers being shut down and quarantined. [CMA CGM](#), a France-based container shipping group with U.S. headquarters in Norfolk, Va., issued a statement that all necessary instructions were given to its teams on land and at sea to ensure these containers were handled and stored in complete safety.

As an extra precaution, the CMA CGM Group is checking all containers that have undergone maintenance in Vietnam since January 1, 2011. This affects around 250 reefer containers. CMA CGM has hired experts to determine the cause of the problem. It is also working closely with other shipping companies affected by this problem to ensure that all necessary safety measures are taken.

Denmark's Maersk also reported explosions in three of its containers. While both companies say the cause of the explosions remains a mystery, [The Financial Times](#) quoted Peter Smidt-Nielsen, general director of Maersk in Vietnam, as saying they may have been caused by contaminated gas that was put into the reefers' cooling units in Vietnam between March 30 and April 25, when a number of containers were repaired at Ho Chi Minh City's Saigon New Port.

4<sup>th</sup> November 2011

---

04. November 2011

### **APL says its reefer container fleet is safe**

The global container shipping line APL has declared its refrigerated container fleet to be safe and announced new precautions to prevent equipment mishaps. The declaration followed reports that at least four refrigerated containers have exploded in 2011. APL said its measures include ensuring that refrigerant used in its reefer containers meets the specifications of equipment manufacturers, withdrawing 100 refrigerated boxes for detailed inspection, and placing new restrictions on where containers can undergo refrigerant system repair. APL has more than 50,000 reefer boxes. The carrier said there have been no explosions or other disasters in its fleet. (it)

[www.apl.com](http://www.apl.com)

4<sup>th</sup> November 2011

---

## Explosion fears spur Seattle port to sequester up to 90 refrigerated containers

**Puget Sound Business Journal by Steve Wilhelm, Staff Writer**

About 80-90 refrigerated ocean containers remain sequestered at the Port of Seattle, in response to fears about exploding containers that killed two people in Vietnam and one in Brazil.

The containers are set away from others and away from power sources so any explosions that might occur would be isolated, said Jennifer Sargent, spokeswoman for the International Longshore and Warehouse Union

“The union is working hard to protect members and public safety, because those containers travel the world and we don’t want any of them to leave the terminals until we know they’re safe,” she said. “The union’s goal is to isolate containers, power them down.”

The explosions were allegedly the result of some containers’ refrigeration systems being charged with improper or contaminated refrigerant while transiting through Vietnam, according to news reports. Refrigerated containers are often called “reefers,” in the trade.

“The longshore and terminal operators are working together, isolating any containers that are questionable,” said Port of Seattle spokeswoman Charla Skaggs. “The Coast Guard is lead agency on the safety issue.”

Coast Guard officials were not available for comment at deadline today.

The containers are at four terminals at the Port of Seattle, Sargent said. Terminal 5 contains 41 sequestered containers, while 25 to 30 are at Terminal 18, about 15 to 20 at Terminal 46, and one at Terminal 30, Sargent said late Friday

7<sup>th</sup> November 2011

---

## Exploding reefer contaminant may be methyl chloride

Monday, November 07, 2011

Refrigeration experts believe that they have discovered with "near certainty" that the cause of several explosions in the cooling systems of refrigerated containers, explosions that have killed three workers worldwide.

A bulletin published by the UK P&I Club reproduces initial findings from Cambridge Refrigeration Technology, which says a counterfeit refrigerant containing methyl chloride is the likely cause of the accidents.

CRT says "refrigerated container refrigeration units should contain polyolester oil and the refrigerant HFC-134a (1,1,1,2-Tetrafluoroethane) and should therefore be incapable of exploding."

But CRT said "material recovered from the exploded units have been analysed by a laboratory and have found to be corroded by a chlorinated compound. Traces of alumina (AL<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>) were also found at the sites.

"From the above data we can be reasonably certain that the pyrophoric liquid (burns in contact with air) to be is trimethyl aluminium (Al<sub>2</sub>(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>6</sub>). The explanation is that the system has been contaminated with a counterfeit refrigerant containing methyl chloride (chloromethane, CH<sub>3</sub>Cl). This gas works as a refrigerant but reacts with the aluminium in the compressor forming trimethyl aluminium, which is a liquid at room temperature."

The entire bulletin can be seen [here](#), but it says refrigerant can be easily checked for contamination using a "standard halide lamp flame test."

Owners of those boxes may face a headache in trying to get them back into service.

CRT said "once a contaminated unit has been identified a procedure for making them safe needs to be identified. The problem is that trimethyl aluminium is a liquid and will be sitting in the crankcase of the compressor."

It suggests "a possible solution might be to find a reagent that could be injected into the compressor, which would slowly react with the trimethyl aluminium and passivate it. Another solution could be to find a way of puncturing the base of the crankcase and blowing out the oil and trimethyl aluminium into a barrel of water using dry nitrogen."

7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> November 2011

---

8<sup>th</sup> November 2011

**Reefer box search widens**

A stack of 80 refrigerated containers at the Port of Seattle has been isolated from the rest of the port for safety reasons.

7<sup>th</sup> November 2011

**Methyl chloride likely cause of reefer box explosions**

The chemical was formerly a common but highly toxic refrigerant responsible for a number of deaths prior to the introduction of CFCs in the 1930s.

7<sup>th</sup> November 2011

---

## More explosive containers found at port

07 11 11 - 15:28 US Coast Guard admits it has no plans yet for dealing with containers. At least ten more potentially explosive containers have been found at the Port of Seattle with a question mark still hanging over the fate of the growing collection of containers. Earlier this year maritime authorities reported that three reefer containers exploded or caused a fire, resulting in two fatalities in Vietnam and one in Brazil. The explosions were believed to be the result of contaminated gas added to the boxes' refrigeration units during servicing in Vietnam. According to local reports, a growing stack of 80 refrigerated containers at the Port of Seattle has been sitting by itself, isolated from the rest of the port for safety reasons.

Source: IFW, Monday 7th November 2011

7<sup>th</sup> November 2011

---

## More explosive containers found at port

**Kizzi Nkwocha** | Mon, 7 Nov 2011

US Coast Guard admits it has no plans yet for dealing with containers

**At least ten more potentially explosive containers have been found at the Port of Seattle with a question mark still hanging over the fate of the growing collection of containers.**

Earlier this year maritime authorities reported that three reefer containers exploded or caused a fire, resulting in two fatalities in Vietnam and one in Brazil.

The explosions were believed to be the result of contaminated gas added to the boxes' refrigeration units during servicing in Vietnam.

According to local reports, a growing stack of 80 refrigerated containers at the Port of Seattle have been sitting by itself, isolated from the rest of the port for safety reasons.

The US Coast Guard said it is working with the terminal operators to keep the 80 containers away from everyone, but admits there is no specific plan yet for dealing with them.

Rudy Finne of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, said: "I personally think it's ludicrous to have possible bombs at every corner here and have everybody seem not that concerned about it."

The Pacific Maritime Association, which represents the various terminal operators, said it is looking for a solution to checking each container to see if it poses any risk. These at-risk containers are being turned away from terminal operators, and as a result, they remain out in the public.

Meantime, the union is worried about containers that left Vietnam and may have passed through local ports before the security alert was put in place.

The three reefers that exploded were operated by Maersk Line, but since the danger was reported all carriers are scrambling to find any reefers that have been repaired in Vietnam since February.

Maersk has removed all its 844 reefer containers that have been repaired in Vietnam.

7<sup>th</sup> November 2011

---

Source: IFW

## More explosive containers found at port

US Coast Guard admits it has no plans yet for dealing with containers

**At least ten more potentially explosive containers have been found at the Port of Seattle with a question mark still hanging over the fate of the growing collection of containers.**

Earlier this year maritime authorities reported that three reefer containers exploded or caused a fire, resulting in two fatalities in Vietnam and one in Brazil.

The explosions were believed to be the result of contaminated gas added to the boxes' refrigeration units during servicing in Vietnam.

According to local reports, a growing stack of 80 refrigerated containers at the Port of Seattle have been sitting by itself, isolated from the rest of the port for safety reasons.

The US Coast Guard said it is working with the terminal operators to keep the 80 containers away from everyone, but admits there is no specific plan yet for dealing with them.

Rudy Finne of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, said: "I personally think it's ludicrous to have possible bombs at every corner here and have everybody seem not that concerned about it."

The Pacific Maritime Association, which represents the various terminal operators, said it is looking for a solution to checking each container to see if it poses any risk. These at-risk containers are being turned away from terminal operators, and as a result, they remain out in the public.

Meantime, the union is worried about containers that left Vietnam and may have passed through local ports before the security alert was put in place.

The three reefers that exploded were operated by Maersk Line, but since the danger was reported all carriers are scrambling to find any reefers that have been repaired in Vietnam since February.

Maersk has removed all its 844 reefer containers that have been repaired in Vietnam.

8<sup>th</sup> November 2011

---

## Substitute refrigerant could have led to reefer explosions

A COUNTERFEIT refrigerant containing methyl chloride is the most likely cause of the explosions in the reefer containers that killed three men who were carrying out maintenance and repairs, and has forced Maersk Line and CMA CGM to ground their reefer boxes, writes *Sylvia Traganida*.

Consultants Cambridge Refrigeration Technology, which is assisting Maersk Line with its investigation, said material recovered from the exploded units have been analysed and have found to be corroded by a chlorinated compound. Traces of alumina were also found.

The methyl chloride contained in the allegedly counterfeit refrigerant blend, which had been added to the systems, reacted with the aluminium in the compressor forming trimethyl aluminium, a liquid at room temperature which ignites spontaneously on contact with air.

"The explosion probably occurred because the repairers used a substance thinking it is refrigerant but which was actually mixed with other gases, possibly used as a cheaper substitute," Cambridge Refrigeration Technology said, adding that lines need to make sure that refrigerant comes from certified sources. ■

[www.lloydslist.com/reefers](http://www.lloydslist.com/reefers)