



GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
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PRESS RELEASE

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Serious Fire Incident at Port

At 15.35 this afternoon a sullage tank on the North Mole exploded and caught fire. The tank contained a mixture of water and used oil. Initial reports indicate that at the time of the explosion two workers were carrying out welding operations on top of the tank that exploded. The precise cause of the accident remains under investigation.

One of the welders, a 40 year old Spanish National has suffered life threatening injuries. He was conveyed to St Bernard's Hospital Accident and Emergency Unit, stabilised and prepared for transfer to a Specialist Burns Unit at Seville Hospital. The other injured worker, a 25 year old also Spanish National, did not suffer serious, life threatening injuries.

A cruise ship that was berthed alongside the North Mole immediately put to sea. 12 passengers aboard the "Independence of the Seas" suffered injuries, mostly minor burns – one passenger suffered a fractured shoulder. The ship did not suffer serious damage.

The Gibraltar Emergency Services attended to the incident and, at the time of issue of this statement had not yet brought the fire under control. Three units of the City Fire Brigade and two of the Defence Fire and Rescue Service, totalling 32 fire fighters are deployed to the scene together with three tugs with fire fighting water jets.

In addition the Gibraltar Government has contracted two additional fire fighting tugs from a Spanish Contractor, and the Spanish Authorities have also made available their Salvamar tug.

The fire fighting operation has focused both on extinguishing the fire, and cooling the adjoining tanks to prevent their explosion. The adjoining tank also caught fire at around 7.40 pm resulting in a much larger fire which has required the land based fire fighters to withdraw. The fire is now being tackled from the sea.

The City Fire Brigade and the Environmental Agency have advised that there is no need to evacuate nearby residential buildings at this stage, although the advice is to keep windows closed as a precaution against smoke. The situation is being kept constantly under review and residents of nearby buildings are requested to stay tuned to GBC TV and radio for up to date information and advice from the authorities. The Civil Contingency Committee remains in permanent meeting to assess the still and unfolding situation.