



Din I-Art Helwa

Din I-Art Helwa
133, Melita Street,
Valletta
MALTA
Tel 0035621225952
email info@dinarthelwa.org
web <http://www.dinarthelwa.org>

The Chairman
MEPA
St Francis Ravelin,
Floriana, FRN1230

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Dear Mr Cassar,

Din I-Art Helwa is extremely concerned by an accident that occurred recently at an LNG facility on the Washington-Oregon border as reported in the Times of Malta of March 31st 2014.

<http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20140331/world/updated-four-hurt-in-lng-plant-explosion-in-the-us-neighbours-evacuated.513022> .The text of this article is at the end of this email.

Although the number of fatalities was not impressive enough to achieve world-wide headline status, the significance of the accident should not escape the attention of our decision makers. The report affirms that state police evacuated some 400 residents to a 3.2 kilometre radius. One assumes that the state police considered that anybody within the 3.2 kilometre radius could be in some danger from the damaged facility.

This is in contrast to the Delimara LNG facility, which is going to be within 1.5 km of Marsaxlokk with a population of 3000.

Din I-Art Helwa re-iterates its position that the FSU solution should not have been approved once the potential for a tragic accident does exist. Although the probability of a mishap has been arguably estimated as being extremely remote, the very fact that the possibility does exist should have ruled out the approved solution and opted for the safer FSRU one.

The entire MEPA board bears the cross of an enormous burden of responsibility on its conscience for approving the project before complete studies had been carried out.

Had these studies been carried out, it would have transpired that the Delimara configuration with an FSU in harbour and with an onshore re-gassification plant is unique in the world while 16 offshore FSRUs have either already deployed or are in the process of being deployed. Moving a combination offshore FSRU/re-gassification facility many kilometres offshore will completely eliminate any possible chance of such occurrences ever causing harm to the residents.

Although unfortunately the die seems to be cast, your comments would be welcome in view of the reported accident.

Yours faithfully,

George Camilleri
Secretary General

Four hurt in LNG plant explosion in the US, neighbours evacuated

A liquefied natural gas storage tank at a gassification facility in southeastern Washington state exploded early today, injuring four workers and requiring hundreds of nearby residents to be evacuated.

The fire and explosion damaged one of two storage tanks at the facility in Plymouth, Washington on the Columbia River separating Washington and Oregon. The explosion occurred at about 8:22 a.m. Pacific time.

In addition to the estimated 17 Williams workers at the facility, local firefighters said they told residents within a two-mile (3.2 km) radius of the area were told to evacuate.

There are two tanks at the Plymouth facility. Each tank is capable of holding 1.2 billion cubic feet (bcf) of natural gas. Officials at Williams could not immediately confirm how big the storage tanks are.

The United States uses about 71 bcf of gas on average per day.

Michele Swaner, a spokeswoman for facility owners Williams, said they were still investigating the cause of the incident. She said the injured person had burns and they expect him to recover.

She said each tank was about half full, which means that about 0.6 billion cubic feet of gas either burned or escaped into the atmosphere.

Swaner also said Williams shut the connections from its mainline - called the Northwest Pipeline - to the Plymouth facility, but noted that the mainline is still moving gas to customers.

The Northwest Pipeline is a 3,900-mile bidirectional transmission system crossing the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah and Colorado. It provides access to natural gas from British Columbia, Alberta, Rocky Mountain, and San Juan Basin in the Four Corners region.

The fire started at the facility and was followed by an explosion in one storage tank, said Ed Dunbar, a captain with the Benton County Fire District office.

To create LNG, natural gas is cooled to minus 260 degrees Fahrenheit at which point it condenses into a clear, odorless liquid, according to Williams' website. The LNG is stored in large tanks, built with a double-wall design, Williams said.

Williams also operates LNG facilities in Pine Needle, North Carolina, and in New Jersey off its Transco pipeline.