



NoPort News

A newsletter of the North Carolina International Terminal

All the news that prints to fit.

January 13, 2010

Unfortunate Events

Yesterday much of Morehead City was evacuated when stevedores unloading a ship at the State Port accidentally punctured nine containers of PETN, an industrial explosive. Such cargoes are routinely handled by the port. The State Ports Authority told us so. And such cargoes would be handled by the container terminal proposed for Southport.

Most such incidents pass without actual harm, but sometimes not. And while most incidents are accidental, some are not. Here are some cases:

Black Tom was an island in New York harbor connected by a pier to the mainland at Jersey City. It was used for shipment of munitions to Europe at the beginning of the First World War. In 1916, a German saboteur placed an incendiary device the size of a fountain pen on the **Johnson 17**, a barge moored at the pier. The resulting fire and explosion obliterated Black Tom.

El Estero was a cargo vessel used for munitions in the Second World War. While at a dock in New York Harbor in 1943, it caught fire. It was towed out into the harbor, where it blew up. This incident and Black Tom had something to do with the choice of a remote and sparsely populated area for the Military Ocean Terminal constructed at Sunny Point in 1952–1955.

M/V Santa Clara I is a container ship that lost 21 containers over the side, including four containers of arsenic trioxide, a nasty marine pollutant, off the coast of New Jersey in 1992. Three of the four containers were recovered, although the contents had spilled. The contents of the fourth were spread on the ocean floor. Area fisheries were closed for six months.

MVSSG Edward A. Carter, Jr., is the container ship that caught fire at Sunny Point in 2001, while loaded with 1200 containers of ammunition. The fire was confined to the engine room, but it took two crewmen's lives and required heroic efforts by the Sunny Point fire department, assisted by local volunteers, to extinguish.

The **Cosco Busan** is the container ship that brushed a pier supporting the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge in 2007, puncturing fuel tanks. In ten seconds, 54,000 gallons of fuel oil were discharged into San Francisco Bay. Although that is not a large spill, relative to events such as the **Exxon Valdez**, the oil spread out of the bay and contaminated beaches on the ocean, as well as beaches on the shores of the bay itself.



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