

Partners join forces in network for industrial firefighting in Antwerp port area

The port of Antwerp-Bruges is an economic player on a global scale. Maritime, industrial, logistics and utility activities make a major contribution to the Belgian economy at both local and national level. Companies that orientate themselves on a global scale on location for production, storage, shipment and innovation also know the value of the Port. Industrial processes are carried out at the highest standards in which the assurance of safety for people and the environment is paramount.



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Maintaining the continuity of business operations, both of an individual company and of the port society, is also a priority for all port stakeholders. Public and private organizations find each other in initiatives to strengthen the reaction power for undisturbed progress of processes. Calamities must be prevented as much as possible, and should they occur, one must be adequately prepared to limit the negative effects and to quickly restore continuity.

Large industrial companies, special organizations such as the nuclear power plant, government organizations and emergency services have their own (often large) striking power in terms of people and resources to fulfil that responsibility. However, calamities can reach a scale

that exceeds the use of individual facilities. For this situation, there must be systems, knowledge and collaborations to be able to help each other. Everyone prepares for their own risk profile and together companies prepare for joint scenarios with which they can be faced. Such cooperation requires joint preparation, shared expertise, coordination, trust and confidence in each other. That's why it makes sense to start a fire service network, in order to help each other in a structured and professional way if necessary.

For a long time, the fire and rescue zones of Antwerp and Waasland, Port of Antwerp-Bruges and some larger industrial fire services in the port area have expressed the intention to cooperate more intensively and within predetermined frameworks in the field of industrial



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▶▶ A large industrial area with specific risk profile: when it hits the fan, joint preparation is the strongest.



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fire service care. The need for such cooperation has increased in recent years. Recently, various fire service organizations have joined forces and a project has started to set up a fire service network for the Seaport Scheldt area.

Port of Antwerp-Bruges

The port of Antwerp-Bruges is the largest seaport in Belgium and the second largest port in Europe, after Rotterdam. It plays an important role in international trade. In 2021, the port of Antwerp-Bruges had a throughput of 289 million tonnes. Port of Antwerp-Bruges is the world's largest port for vehicles and the 12th container port in the world. It is home to the largest chemical cluster in Europe and handles large amounts of liquid bulk. The Antwerp port area is connected to the North Sea via the river Scheldt. It is located deep inland, which significantly reduces the distances to be covered for rail or road transport. This plays to the advantage of container transport, which results in extensive use of these transport options. In the Antwerp port area with 90 Seveso companies (oil, gas and chemical companies with higher levels of chemicals on site), one nuclear power plant, countless industrial-maritime scenarios are in need of an overarching operational policy in the field of fire service care. The Antwerp port area is located on both sides of the River Scheldt and is served by two public fire and rescue service zones: Antwerp and Waasland.

Working together in the Fire service network Seaport Scheldt (the network)

The Seaport Scheldt area is a complex risk area with a lot of industrial activities. A wide variety of companies where hazardous substances are present reside

in the port, including chemical production companies and storage and shipment companies. In addition, the port has a large number of transport movements (with hazardous substances) by road, water and rail. Characteristic of the port is the proximity of habited areas, such as the city centre of Antwerp. It is the task of the government, the established companies, the nuclear power plant and Port of Antwerp-Bruges to guarantee safety and continuity in the port area.

One of the important means to contribute to the safety and continuity of the port is the presence of fire service care. A distinction can be made here in the classic public or municipal fire service care, designed by the fire service zones of the government, and private or industrial fire service care designed by the fire service units of the various companies and the nuclear power plant that are located in the port area. The industrial fire service units act as the first units until (in case of undesired escalation) the governmental fire services have arrived. In addition, the industrial fire service units are often specialized to act within the specific business processes of the company in question.

The governmental fire services of Antwerp and Waasland, the nuclear power plant and the company fire services of several large industrial partners in the port and Port of Antwerp-Bruges, have expressed the intention to cooperate more intensively in the preparation and suppression of large-scale incidents in the public and private port industries within predetermined frameworks. 'Prevent what can be prevented, keep small what starts small, intervene quickly in starting incidents and use the most appropriate means in incident response.' This collaboration is a formalization of

▶ Primary focus of the BZS-network: restore fast business continuity.

the already existing relationships in order to be well prepared and to be able to act efficiently if necessary. The aim is to organize fire service support for larger industrial scenarios in the port area more efficiently, at the same or lower cost than with an individual investment.

Fire service network Seaport Scheldt

The fire service network starts with the fire service zones of Waasland and Antwerp, Port of Antwerp-Bruges, four chemical companies and the nuclear power plant but is explicitly set up to also attract other companies on the left and right banks of the port. The left bank has the same important role and interests as the right bank. Building on existing strong structures, the Fire service network Seaport Scheldt aims to become the central cooperation body for industrial fire service care in the field of:

- 1) Using special and specialist firefighting equipment, vehicles and extinguishing agents;
- 2) Making officials available with industrial knowledge and expertise;
- 3) Educating and training key functions in industrial scenarios;
- 4) Exploring opportunities for joint market exploration and procurement for industrial facilities;
- 5) Developing an expertise platform for industry incident management, preferably with international orientation.

This cooperation makes the fire service network a unique and additional quality factor for guaranteeing continuity in port

Overview of participating partners in the Fire service network Seaport Scheldt:

1. Fire Service Antwerpen
2. Fire Service Waasland
3. Port of Antwerp-Bruges (Haven van Antwerpen-Brugge NV van publiek recht)
4. ENGIE Electrabel N.V. / Nuclear Facility Doel
5. BASF Antwerpen N.V.
6. Evonik Antwerpen N.V.
7. Covestro N.V.
8. TotalEnergies Refinery N.V.

processes. A reinforcement for every organization (public and private) that has to prepare for calamities that threaten continuity.

Developing a Mutual Aid Network

The fire service network is primarily intended for bundling strength in large-scale and specific industrial scenarios in the Seaport Scheldt area. Preparing Mutual Aid for a faster and better intervention in the unlikely event of an escalating major calamity. However, the envisaged network should not only be limited to 'joint ad hoc emergence if a major incident develops', the cooperation should also be aimed at proactively bringing organizations together before incidents occur, to make agreements on incident prevention, good preparation for cooperation in larger scenarios and crisis management.

The identity of the collaboration must become solid, recognizable and decisive in the area. The fire service network is a powerful partner and will be taken seriously by partners in the industry. For this reason, the participants have chosen the name Fire service network Seaport Scheldt. After the start-up, the platform

▼ It is all about the triangle public-industry-harbour and the strongest chain.



Photos courtesy of BASF, Evonik, Port of Antwerp-Bruges and Antwerp Fire Service

Finally, the fire service network can develop the profile of an expertise platform with national and international partners such as NFPA, GESIP and JOIFF, PII, WFVD. The collaboration is ambitious for the participants in the port area of the river Scheldt as well as innovative and distinctive compared to existing initiatives elsewhere in the world. This makes the fire service network an image-defining and leading partnership.

The organization of Mutual Aid for Industrial firefighting Port Antwerpen-Waasland

The fire service network is managed by a Board. A governance model of the board has been chosen that assumes parity on public and private interests. The board will consist of six seats: two seats filled by industrial companies, two seats filled by the fire and rescue services and two seats filled by Port of Antwerp-Bruges. Because the Port of Antwerp-Bruges has both a public and private responsibility, the relationship between board members from a private interest and from a public interest is equally divided (three to three) and therefore equal in the public-private partnership. The network will be designed as an independent legal entity, probably a non-profit association. The principles of the network are plain and simple:

- Participation in the network is voluntary for all organizations;

will be explicitly open to other organizations to join and cooperate more actively in the Seaport Scheldt area.

Opportunities of this network

The collaboration gives the opportunity to benefit from each other's resources such as firefighting materials and emergency workers. It also offers the possibility to structurally unlock the knowledge and skills available in each of the companies. The network will support the development of a pool of industrial experts that can be alarmed for emergencies and for training and workshops. In order to maintain this knowledge and skills, education and training are needed. The joint organization gives the opportunity to specialize even more specifically and to purchase industrial equipment more efficiently. This is also the case with the joint purchase of firefighting materials such as firefighting foam or training capacity on training grounds.

Public-Private of Mutual Aid Partnership

A Public-Private Partnership (PPP) is a collaboration between one or more governments and private companies. Through cooperation, parties can unite and thus meet each other in the responsibilities that the various governments and private companies have. A PPP is normally established under a certain contract form that describes, among other things, the design, construction, financing, maintenance, operation and management of the project to be realized.



Photos courtesy of BASF, Evonik, Port of Antwerp-Bruges and Antwerp Fire Service



▲ The challenge: getting the right equipment in the right place as fast as possible, instead of getting more and more. Vehicles by EVONIK and BASF.

- Participation in network activities is on a voluntary basis;
- The network participants can appeal to each other's units and experts on a voluntary basis and until the moment of a concrete request for help, it can be decided whether or not to comply with this;
- The network has no commercial interests or revenue model, no one profits financially from it;
- The provision of support takes place within existing rules, agreements and procedures for operational action, without a supporting party taking any leading or decisive responsibility for a deployment.

In order to guarantee the long-term progress of the network, to take on projects and to be able to serve the participants, personnel is necessary. A distinction will be made between professional staff consisting of one of two network coordinators and supporting

▼ Joint training and testing are growing interests since incidents are getting less (luckily of course).



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Network organizations for the Fire service network Seaport Scheldt:

1. GB (Unified Fire Services in Netherlands, Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Moerdijk as example)
2. JOIFF (Joint Oil Industry Fire Forum)
3. NFPA (National Fire Protection Association)
4. GESIP: (Executes audit & consulting to evaluate: Emergency plans; Safety Management Systems; Firefighting installations)
5. PII: (Platform Industrial Incident management/NL)
6. WFVD (Werk Feuerwehr Verband Deutschland)

management staff for administrative work. The network coordinators work under the direction of the board and are appointed within the network or seconded/placed from a network participant.

The network organization is funded by its participants. Structural annual budget is provided by public fire services, port authority and industrial members is a predetermined formula. Specific demands and wishes for collective facilities, educations/trainings or network extensions can be worked out in project proposals and put up for approval to the board and the membership. Special Belgian funds like Seveso-fonds and Nuclear fonds can be asked to participate in projects.

Ambitions of the network, entering Champions league of industrial preparation

The primary objective of the cooperation is to support and strengthen each other in the event of large-scale incidents in the port area by means of pre-framed discussions and obligations. As said: the partners in the cooperation support each other in the event of calamities that exceed the fire service capacity of an individual partner by means of the exchange of knowledge, vehicles/equipment and personnel. In addition to the fact that the primary objective is to support each other in the event of calamities, it has also been

stated that the cooperation does not have to be limited to actual action in large-scale and specialist deployments. The collaboration also has various opportunities with regard to, among other things, joint practice, knowledge development and tendering of resources and materials.

With this initiative, the public and industrial partners and harbour authorities in Antwerp-harbour make a step into the champions league of industrial preparation on large and escalation scenarios. Various harbours and large industrial areas around the globe have already joined collaboration models. Rotterdam joins forces in a local collaboration model with unified fire services, in Houston partners developed CIMA, in Sweden oil-industry joins forces for tank and bund firefighting in SMC, Amsterdam has the AMAS/AYMA-collaboration and Essex (after Buncefield in 2005) developed EPMA. The Antwerp-partners strongly believe in their initiative, combining availability of trucks/equipment, expertise, safety-officers and network. Over public and private boundaries, because there are no private or public incident scenarios. There are only incident scenarios that are best addressed with joined private and public forces and trained leadership.

➔ For more information, go to www.kappetijn.eu