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Mr Hollis said: "I heard the blast. It sounded like a bomb going off. The fire probably lasted for about 20 to 25 minutes."

And he was not confident of finding out the full truth about the incident, adding: "They won't tell us every-thing about what happened, based on my previous experience of the gas companies."

His wife added: "We could see flames and smoke shooting up into the air and the siren was going off very loudly."

"It was really alarming. We could see billowing black smoke. The fire was right in the centre of the terminal and there were helicopters flying all around."

After the blaze had been put out, she added: "It could have been 10 times worse. But we are just so glad that it wasn't serious and that everyone was safe."

"It always worries me. It is really alarming when something like this happens to know that you are only 119m away from the terminal."

Questions were going to be asked about the safety of the site, which was due to hold another of its regular emergency exercises next Wednesday, she added.

After the 5.45pm blast, a stream of fire engines headed to the site from all over the north of the county to deal with the incident.

Local lanes normally quiet on a winter evening were alive with screaming sirens. A police helicopter hovered overhead, and road-blocks were thrown up on the coast road to stop traffic going past the site.

Norfolk fire service said the blaze was in a "water treatment plant" on the Shell UK site, and that nine appliances and numerous support vehicles were at the scene.

A spokesman confirmed there had been initial reports of an explosion and a "major fire" although right from the start it was not believed that chemicals were involved. Foam fire-fighting equipment was used on the site to help tackle the blaze.

A silver control centre had been set up at North Walsham fire station, which also involved police personnel.

Shell said 46 people were safely evacuated from its terminal and that the fire was out by 7.30pm, with "no threat to the local area".

The company confirmed the fire was in the waste water system, but had been "extinguished safely, the plant shut down safely" and everything was under control.

A statement from the company said: "There is no threat to the health of personnel at the site. The incident will be investigated by Shell and the relevant authorities, as is normal under these circumstances."

Bacton is one of the largest gas terminal complexes in the UK with a third of the nation's gas landing ashore from the southern North Sea before being distributed across the UK.

The site has five separate terminals processing supplies from three main North Sea fields. It also receives gas from Belgium and the rest of Europe from the Interconnector terminal, with this aspect of the site operated and maintained by around 35 staff with a team on site 24 hours a day.

Last night, Norfolk police sent an automated message to 360 homes in the Bacton area confirming the fire was out and the plant shut down safely.

Local councillor and member of the gas terminal liaison committee Wyndham Northam said he was very impressed with the terminal's emergency arrangements, adding: "If there is an incident, I am quite content they would be able to control it themselves. It is very effective. It is a very well-run organisation."

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Find story at www.northnorfolknews.co.uk

Shell To Sea

01 March 2008

Community Information - Erris, County Mayo, Ireland

Bacton explosion probe begins

*edp24.co.uk
29 February 2008 09:11*

Neighbours of Norfolk's giant gas terminal are today pondering how close they came to disaster after a blast rocked the seaside complex.

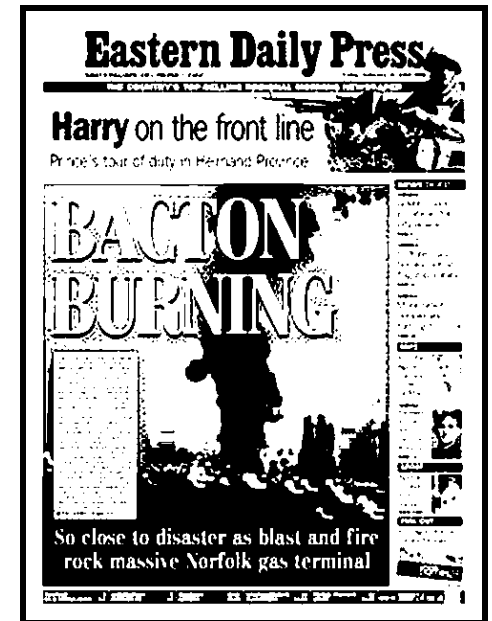
Villagers in Bacton are used to living in the shadow of the site's mass of pipes, pumps, aerials and chimneys, which handle a third of the nation's gas.

But many were shocked when their homes were rocked by the 5.45pm blast from a waste water system in the middle of the Shell section at the eastern end of the site, which sent a huge column of smoke towering over the terminal.

Officials last night could not say what had caused the explosion, but assured an investigation would be held.

Shell plant manager at Bacton, Don Paulino, refused to say how close the explosion had been to causing a major incident.

And he declined to comment on whether the explosion happened near any flammable materials, saying it was in "a watery area".



But he stressed that the emergency plan in place had worked very well, that there was no threat to the local community and that gas supplies were not affected.

Even though the National Grid gave assurances that the shutdown of the Bacton Shell site would not affect national supplies - because enough was coming in from other sources - there was last night a surge in UK gas prices caused by news of the blast.

Among the nearest people to the explosion and fire were Richard and Anna Hollis, who own the Castaways Holiday Park next door to the site.

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Just one day this week saw three major gas-related incidents that caused severe damage, disruption, injury and in one case a fatality within the space of a few hours. All this in an industry that claims public and worker safety is a top priority.

The explosion and fire at Shell's Bacton gas terminal is a reminder of the potential for complete devastation posed by these facilities. The cause of the incident may never fully be known because of a tight-lipped policy, but the residents nearby are mercifully safe, at least for now.

As a reminder, the page opposite lists a sample of fires and explosions over a ten year period of Shell's century-long operations. S2S

Fireman dead, 35 injured in gas blast in French city of Lyon

<http://afp.google.com>

PARIS (AFP) — An explosion caused by a gas leak rocked the French city of Lyon on Thursday, killing a firefighter and injuring 35 people, two of them seriously, police said.

A large number of firefighters were dispatched to the scene on the Cours Lafayette shopping street in the heart of Lyon where the blast occurred around midday during maintenance work on an underground gas pipe.

Fire engulfed several buildings in the centre of France's third biggest city and police evacuated close to 1,000 people from the area.

A 35-year-old firefighter, father of two children, who was investigating a leak of gas into the basement of a building, was killed in the blast, said Lyon Mayor Gerard Colomb.

Interior Minister Michele Alliot-Marie, who travelled immediately to the scene, told reporters that lax security was partly to blame.

... Two people were seriously injured in the blast, including an employee of gas utility GDF, who suffered lung damage, medical officials told AFP.

Explosion at US shopping centre

Thursday, 28 February 2008 <http://news.bbc.co.uk>

A blast has torn through a shopping centre in the US state of Illinois.

Six people were taken to hospital after the explosion blew the top off a shopping plaza in Waukegan, about 65km (40 miles) north of Chicago.

It was not clear what caused the explosion, which happened at around 1230 (1830 GMT) above a mobile phone shop and hair salon.

Waukegan Police Chief Bill Biang told the Chicago Tribune newspaper that the blast "appears to be a gas explosion".

TV footage showed a collapsed ceiling and shattered shop windows as emergency services rushed to the scene.

Fire crews from several towns were helping with rescue efforts, searching to see whether people are trapped inside the building.

A team from the People's Gas company were on the scene to investigate the suspected gas leak.

Explosions & Fires: 1992-2002

Sampling of Incidents at Shell Group Companies & Joint Ventures - Addendum #1 to "Riding The Dragon" [ISBN 0-9726155-0-4]

21 Jun 92 Choon Hong III oil tanker explodes and burns while unloading xylene at the Port Klang, Malaysia oil depot ... **29 Sep 92** fire at Shell's Deer Park, Texas refinery ... **1 Apr 93** explosion of a sludge collection storage tank at Shell's Martinez, California refinery ... **26 Aug 93** fire at Shell's Martinez, California refinery ... **20 Jan 94** fire at Shell's Pernis, Netherlands oil refinery ... **27 May 94** a fire at Shell Chemical's Belpre, Ohio plant ... **18 Aug 94** fire and explosion at Shell chemical plant at Norco, Louisiana ... **13 Jan 95** fire at Shell's Geelong refinery in Australia ... **10 Jun 95** oil well blow-out & fire occur in the El Isba oil field at Shell Syria venture ... **1 Dec 95** explosion and fire at Shell Oil tank farm at McCamey, Texas ... **3 Feb 96** explosion at hydrogen unit operated by contractor Air Products at Shell's Martinez, California refinery ... **1 April 96** explosion and fire at Shell's Martinez, California refinery ... **3 April 96** fire in the desulfurization unit of Shell's Pernis, Netherlands refinery ... **24 Feb 97** fire at the Pilipinas Shell storage depot at Pandacan, near Manila, in the Philippines ... **22 Jun 97** explosion and fire occur at Shell's Deer Park, Texas chemical plant ... **24 June 97** Shell Offshore, Inc., fined \$10,000 by the US Department of the Interior for operational and/or environmental violations ... **20 Jul 97** small fire erupts at Shell Oil's 150,000 barrel-a-day refinery in Martinez, California ... **13 Aug 97** fire in distillation unit shuts down Shell 28,000 barrels-per-day refinery at Odessa, Texas ... **31 Oct 97** flash fire occurs in one of the loading bays at the main fuels terminal of the Pilipinas Shell storage depot at Pandacan, near Manila, in the Philippines ... **16 Dec 97** fire at Shell Chemical's Geismar, Louisiana plant ... **17 Dec 97** electrical fire in 625,000 mt/yr steam cracker unit at Shell Chemical plant at Moerdijk, Netherlands ... **19 May 98** explosion and fire at SAPREF oil refinery in Durban, South Africa ... **2 Jun 98** storage tank explosion at Shell's Pernis, Netherlands refinery in Rotterdam ... **15 July 98** Shell Petroleum Development Company pays \$258,000 to owners of farmland destroyed by fire caused by a leak in a gas pipeline in Rivers State, Nigeria ... **10 Aug 98** hydrogen explosion in a compressor unit at Shell Chemical's Belpre, Ohio plant ... **14 Aug 98** hydrocracking unit at Shell's Deer Park, Texas oil refinery, shut by a fire the week of August 3rd, is scheduled to be back on line ... **27 Aug 98** Environmental Rights Action (ERA) of Nigeria reports pipeline explosion at Well #13 at Shell's Awoba flow station, at Bille, Rivers State, Nigeria ... **6 Oct 98** fire occurs at Shell's Berre-L'Etang, France refinery ... **25 Nov 98** six workers are killed at Equilon refinery near Seattle trying to remove residue from a coking unit ... **25 Dec 98** explosion and fire at Shell's gas-to-liquids plant at Bintulu, Malaysia ... **2 Jan 99** US Minerals Management Service reports "small fire" at Shell Offshore,

Inc. platform A in block 128 of Garden Banks area in the Gulf of Mexico ... **15 Jan 99** US Minerals Management Service reports "minor flash fire" at Shell Offshore, Inc. platform JC in block 176 of Eugene Island area in the Gulf of Mexico. Human error cited as cause ... **6 Feb 99** eight oil workers suffered severe burns after a Shell Oil pipeline explodes in southern Nigeria ... **7 Feb 99** US Minerals Management Service reports fire, platform damage, and worker injury at Shell Offshore, Inc. platform JA in block 40 of South Marsh Island area in the Gulf of Mexico. Equipment failure & human error cited as cause ... **23 Feb 99** fire at Motiva refinery in Convent, Louisiana ... **4 Mar 99** a mid-afternoon explosion at the polymerization unit at Equilon's Puget Sound refinery in Anacortes, Washington ... **10 Jun 99** massive fireball and explosion of the Olympic Pipeline near Bellingham, Washington ... **12 Aug 99** fire reported at Motiva's refinery in Convent, Louisiana ... **24 Aug 99** small fire near the hydrogen unit at Equilon Enterprises' refinery in Bakersfield, California ... **17 Sep 99** leaking oil from the Ugehelli-Rapele pipeline at Ekakpamre, Urhobo in Delta State, Nigeria ... **24 Mar 00** fire and two explosions at Shell's Godorf oil refinery in Cologne, Germany ... **27 Apr 00** hundreds of residents living in a Brunei Shell company housing complex near the oilfield town of Seria, Brunei, are forced to abandon their homes following an explosion at one of the company's gas pipelines ... **18 Aug 00** explosion at Motiva's Convent, Louisiana refinery ... **26 Oct 00** fire starts in storage tank being demolished at Shell's Deer Park, Texas refinery ... **January 01** the Shell/BP joint venture South Africa Petroleum Refinery (SAPREF) in Durban, South Africa has two refinery fires in January ... **23 May 01** gas explosion at the partially Shell-owned (46%) Gorm oilfield in North Sea ... **6 Jun 01** a Shell pipeline, which passes through the community of Baraale in Rivers State, Nigeria.. Several months later, in October, the leaking oil caught fire ... **17 July 01** a large aboveground storage tank holding spent sulfuric acid at Motiva's Delaware City, Delaware refinery explodes ... **7 Aug 01** well blow-out and fire occur at the Zauliyah-16 well in Oman ... **23 Sept 01** fire at Shell's Pernis, Netherlands refinery ... **22 Jan 02** "contained explosion" and fire in sulfur removal unit at Motiva's Delaware City, Delaware refinery ... **12 Feb 02** an explosion and flash fire at Shell Chemical Co.'s Geismar, Louisiana ... **3 April 02** fire at Shell's Deer Park, Texas plant ... **13 May 02** fire at Shell's Deer Park, Texas chemical plant ... **24 July 02** fire at the hydrotreater unit of Motiva's Port Arthur, Texas refinery ... **1 Sept 02** explosion of storage tank – a sulfur pressure vessel – occurs at the Shell/BP South Africa Petroleum Refinery (SAPREF) in Durban, South Africa.

Compiled by Jack Doyle for the Environmental Health Fund, November 2002. The incidents listed above are taken from the available public record, government reports, court records, company documents, and third-party reports. It is not a complete and comprehensive listing of all such incidents at Shell companies and joint ventures for the indicated period.