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Combining forces



The Unified Fire Service Amsterdam is a stepping stone for cooperation in a strongly developing port area, write Marleen van de Kerkhof and Kees Kappetijn.

A public-private partnership in the largest gasoline port in the world aims to create an unparalleled safety model that is expected to help the Dutch capital's future growth.

Containing the fifth largest seaport in Western Europe and the third largest airport in Europe, Amsterdam has only one ambition for safety: making it the top priority.

When certain risks are clearly caused by industrial organisations, it is only fair that those organisations take responsibility in preventing and minimising those risks by developing and organising response capabilities in case of fires, spills or other industrial incidents. Consequently, the Regional Safety Authority, the Port Authority, and over 20 industrial companies have decided to join forces to develop a safety organisation for Amsterdam's port and industrial areas that aims to be operational at the end of 2019.

It is envisaged that the new organisation will start out as a fire service for industrial, maritime and urban fire and rescue and from there grow into a safety platform that encompasses the law enforcement and environmental authorities as well as the port's industrial sector.

The Port of Amsterdam is a strong supporter of this initiative and will take the lead in the first years of development, bringing all stakeholders to the table. Why? Because safety is not only a core value for firm spatial and economic development, it also strengthens the position of the port and

attracts new business and investments.

Amsterdam is the largest city in the Netherlands with approximately 860,000 inhabitants and a metropolitan area that encompasses close to 1.4 million. A sea lock near IJmuiden connects it to the North Sea and the substantial maritime transport routes beyond.

The lock marks the beginning of an industrial zone that starts with the blast furnace facilities of Tata Steel and ends with the various tank storage facilities of Vopak, Oiltanking, and Eurotank in the Port of Amsterdam.

The area has more than 25 companies in the Seveso category and 55 in the ISPS category, each with special and specific safety regimes. The port is the largest gasoline port in the world, the second largest coal port in Europe, and houses various business clusters that process agriproducts such as cocoa and potable alcohols. Moreover, in between these industrial activities around 190 sea cruise ships per year thread their way to the passenger terminal in the heart of Amsterdam. That daily transport movement between Amsterdam and IJmuiden is equivalent to a floating apartment building with an average of 2,150 people on board, or 400,000 people a year.

The city has its challenges. Though the port and industrial areas are already built up against the city, 70,000 new homes and apartments are planned in the coming years to even begin satisfying the growing market demands; large portions

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of the building space will have to be found in the harbour area.

This in a city that is very dense in the way it is built, with a charming yet complex system of water management consisting of canals, streams, and lakes. The existing use of the city already takes a toll on its accessibility and on the throughput of transport, and this pressure will only increase in the future with more inhabitants, more tourists, and more economic activities. Moreover, the nature of the industrial activities in the port is to change: the aim is to make the transition from fossil energy sources such as oil and coal to solar, wind and hydrogen, and to develop commercial activities that contribute to a bio-based and circular economy.

The task facing Amsterdam has some logical conditions. Whatever might be put in motion, it should be sustainable from a people, planet and profit perspective, with support from the community and compliant with national and European regulatory frameworks. Above all, it should be safe. The construction and development processes should run smoothly and safely, and the structural safety situation that is being aimed for should adhere to the newest insights as well.

With regards to safety in the harbour, Amsterdam's stakeholders – including corporate and governmental – have united. From a shared awareness that the challenges of the future cannot be carried by an individual local authority such as the Amsterdam municipality, the Regional Safety Authority, or even by a singular company or clustered industrial group, stakeholders have joined forces in the form of a public-private partnership.

Though the responsibilities per stakeholder are different, safety is the result of interaction and cooperation between those same stakeholders. The Amsterdam municipality, the Regional Safety Authority, the Environmental Service for the North Sea Canal Area, 20 to 40 larger industrial companies from the port area (partly unified in AMAS, the Amsterdam Mutual Aid System) and the Port of Amsterdam are working together to shape safe surroundings to work and live in.

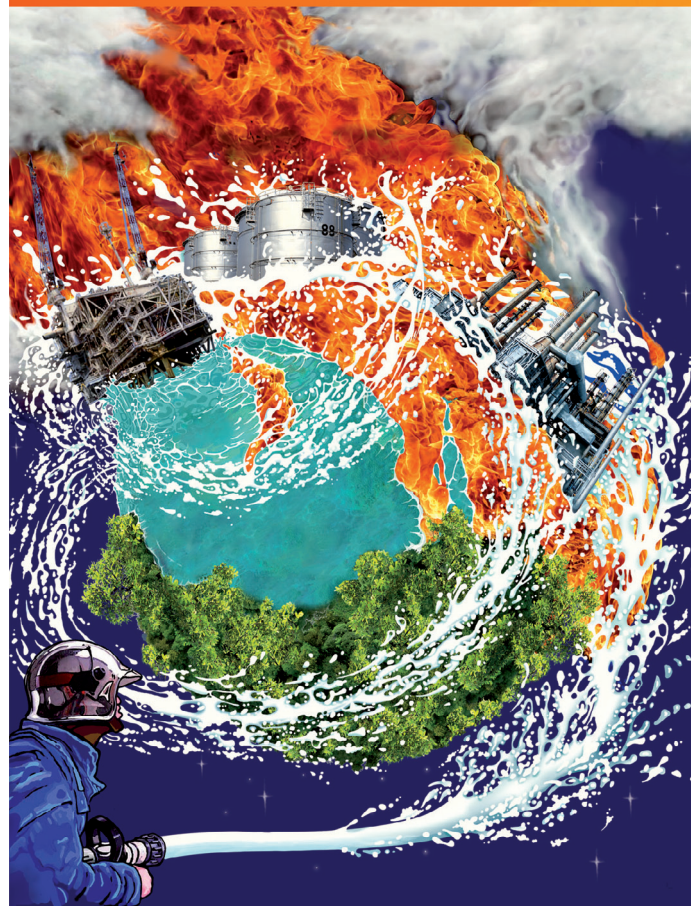
The short-term ambition is to have a unified firefighting organisation operational within the coming two years that is prepared for all fires and incident types that might occur in a complex port and industrial area.

The long-term aim is to build a platform where these parties, both public and private, can come together to work on further developing the different facets of safety in the region, which include fire, water and environmental considerations, as well as preventing political subversion and cyber-crime. The cooperation consists of: sharing information; learning from evaluation; joint training and exercising; risk-centred supervision; and joint enforcement action.

Amsterdam is not unique in the development of a unified fire service for its port area. Other sea ports such as Rotterdam and Moerdijk, as well as Schiphol Airport, have already undertaken similar initiatives, although outside of The Netherlands such cooperation appears to be less common. However, the long-term ambition of a cooperative partnership to establish an integral safety centre for the port does distinguish Amsterdam from other ports in



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STORAGE TANKS

The Unified Fire Service Amsterdam will provide operational strength for incidents in the Port of Amsterdam.



the Netherlands and Europe. The same goes for the proposed governance and contribution models of the UFSA: the Regional Safety Authority, the Port of Amsterdam, and industry will establish an organisation with a joint safety goal, in which each of the three parties will pay their third of the bill.

Organising together, governing together, responsible together, and contributing together, the Unified Fire Service Amsterdam will be a reality in 2019. The Port of Amsterdam is the driving force of this process and will guide the project with the Regional Safety Authority and the port industry.

The UFSA will be a unit that provides operational strength for industrial, maritime, and 'regular' fires and incidents in the public space of the harbour area. Tank and bund firefighting will be a specialised task of the unit.

The UFSA will be housed in a central location in the harbour and will be manned 24/7 by a basic six-person, two-vehicle staff. The turnout time for almost all organisations in the area will be six minutes, with a maximum of eight. The two primary turnout vehicles will be a TS4i (an industrial water tender, equipped for at least four people) and an AS2 (industrial water tender with a large-capacity pump, roof monitor, and multiple cubic meters of water and foaming agent on board, equipped for at least two people). The UFSA housing will be part of a planned logistics centre with maintenance facilities from the Amsterdam Fire Brigade. This centre will also provide storage space for materials and 60m³ of foaming agent for tank firefighting from the tank storage companies that make up AMAS.

The participating companies will incorporate the availability of a corporate fire brigade outside of their own site into their individual safety management systems and into the setup of their personal emergency service. The guidelines laid out by the control room of the Regional Safety Authority will dictate the alarm, turnout, and deployment procedures. The unit's profile as regards training, exercising and drills will be primarily determined by the risks and the credible and normative scenarios of the companies actively contributing to the unit.

The quality label for service provider training is likely to be provided by the Joint Oil Industry Fire Forum (Joiff) as the independent association for industrial hazard management and corporate fire brigades.

The advantage of the UFSA for the Regional Safety Authority is that operational clout will be made available in an area that currently has noticeably long turnout times. The advantage for industry lies in the availability of a corporate fire brigade with a fast turnout time and secured capacity and expertise in the corporate processes of each of the member companies. It is expected that this will contribute to increasing the resilience of a company after an incident, securing business continuity.

The UFSA will be set up as a legal entity in its own right, functioning independently from each of its three parent organisations. Broadly speaking, The Netherlands has three organisational models for this type of safety organisation: part of a public entity (eg a safety authority), part of a private entity (an industrial organisation), or independent. Similarly to the Unified Fire Brigade in Rotterdam and the safety organisation of the Chemelot chemical cluster in Sittard-Geleen, Amsterdam chose the independent organisational model. Industry members organised themselves through an independent platform that could then be tied to the newly established entity of the UFSA. AMAS will continue to exist as a platform to acquire equipment and foam for tank fire-fighting. The members of AMAS will also become members of the UFSA.

The UFSA will be governed by a board of six members. Two seats will be filled by the Regional Safety Authority, two by the unified industry, and two by the Port of Amsterdam. This creates an equally balanced board, where neither the public nor the private partners can push through unwanted developments. The Port of Amsterdam fulfils the role of facilitator in this setup, due to both its entrepreneurial/commercial (more market-oriented) tasks and its controlling and supervising (more public) functions.

Regarding the exploitation of the UFSA, it has been agreed that each of the participants will take on a third of the total budget. In the first years of the start-up phase, the share of the Port of Amsterdam may be a little larger. The goal is to shrink that share to less than one third over the coming years, as more companies become members of the unit.

For the Port of Amsterdam, the UFSA is a stepping stone – the first irreversible step towards cooperation between organisations that want to further build on port safety in the most optimal way in the future.

The first step organises the operational means to be able to quickly and effectively act during special scenarios. However, the aim is to come together to think of systems and concepts that reduce the probability of various types of incidents and to make information and data available to each other that has predictive value when it comes to the conception of these incidents.

The government works with information about all types of criminal activities; the licensing authorities and supervisors know the regulatory frameworks within which companies can and should operate; the road, water, and railway authorities have expertise in the planning of transport movements; and the fire brigade has insight into when and where fires can start. The combination of this information makes incidents and criminal activity almost predictable.

Aside from the availability of good and quick operational response methods for port-related incidents, the interest of the Port of Amsterdam lies in the joint commitment of stakeholders to create a climate that is as attractive as possible for potential companies to settle in the port area.

Companies that are already present should find it a compelling reason to stay, while for new companies it may be a reason to choose Amsterdam over other ports in the Le Havre-Hamburg region. This is not just because safety in Amsterdam has been made more accessible, but because safety can play a valuable role in the image of a company.

Finally, with the Port of Amsterdam fulfilling its role as relationship broker with due diligence, the obstacles regarding the different types of responsibilities for individual organisations should also be low, which means that issues around settlement, investment and construction can be resolved quickly and professionally.



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