

FIRE WATCH

ONTARIO INDUSTRIAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION

March 2005

Shades of Plastimet rocked Horizon Plastics, Cobourg, April 26, 2005

Just like Plastimet in Hamilton, thick black smoke and flames shooting in the air could be seen for miles, when shortly after 2:00 p.m. on the afternoon of April 26th, fire broke out at the Horizons Plastic Plant, the 2nd largest employer in Cobourg.

Fire crews from Peterborough, Smith-Ennismore-Lakefield Township and Otonabee-South Monaghan Township along with a foam truck from CFB Trenton all responded to assist the Cobourg Fire Department.

Everyone from Horizons Plastic escaped and a state of emergency was called when over 300 people in the immediate area were evacuated, as well as two public schools and a day care.

High winds and searing heat made it difficult to fight the fire as well other units were used to hose down the facility close by which housed hazards chemicals including acetone and trichloro-ethylene.

Because it was primarily plastics, the more water that was put on it the more the fire spread. The concern was not the fire itself but the toxins of the plastic burning that made it dangerous to the health of everyone.

This fire could have been a lot worse had it not been for the combined efforts of the many firefighters and volunteers who quickly reacted and brought the fire under control around 6:30 p.m.

Later that evening after the Ministry of the Environment had tested the air quality, residents were allowed to return to their homes.

Residents and other businesses praised all who were involved for their quick reactions and concerns for the citizens of Cobourg.

Two juveniles have been charged.

10th Annual Wm. Beatty Golf Tournament

Who would have thought 10 years ago that it would have lasted and to top it off... be successful!!

As you all know, this tournament was named after Bill Beatty, Fire Chief of Esso, Sarnia, died suddenly in March of 1994 of a heart attack. Bill was a member and director of the Ontario Industrial Fire Protection Association, a Volunteer fire fighter with Camlachie Fire Dept and was very instrumental in the planning of the Fire Science Technology course at Lambton College.

As a gesture from several members of the Association and knowing that Bill was very conscious of money, with a small wager decided to have a friendly 'round' of golf in his memory in 1995 not realizing it would last this long.

Because of Bill's contribution to the Fire Science Technology Course, monies raised from our annual event go to assist two students each year with their course studies and we are very proud of each of our recipients.

Once again, the O.I.F.P.A. will be hosting the Wm. Beatty Memorial Golf Tournament at the famous Whirlpool Golf and Country Club in Niagara Falls, where the course is challenging and yet gives all golfers a fair shot and the food is excellent.



The date – **Thursday, September 22, 2005** with tee-off time 10:00 a.m.

Price is \$150.00 per golfer and you are all welcome!!! Hope you can join us.

William Beatty Scholarship Award Winner

One of the latest scholarship award winners was Kyle Crocker of London Ontario. Kyle is currently enrolled in his fourth semester of the Fire Science Technology Program at Lambton College. He holds a Pre-service Firefighter Education and Training certificate, NFPA Firefighter 1 certificate as well as other certificates in Emergency Patient Care and Hazardous Materials Awareness. Kyle will be available to work in a fire protection co-op position in May of 2005.

To learn more about Lambton College's available co-op students contact Patti Helps at 519-542-7751 ext 3202 or by e-mail at patti@lambton.on.ca

April 7th Seminar

Explosion Suppression System Seminar

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for coming to PepsiCo Foods Canada Inc. Quaker Oats plant for the Explosion Suppression System Seminar and making it a big success. A special thanks to Greer Gordon and to Garry Hoskins for pulling this all together while I was out of the plant on business prior to the seminar and also to the guest speaker Clive Nixon from BS&B and to Michael Patel from Romatec for bringing Clive to the plant.

We had a good diverse and interactive participation from everyone at the seminar for this very interesting topic. There are many systems out there in our places of businesses that have no suppression. This seminar allowed us the opportunity too better understand the reasons and the effectiveness of rapid suppression intervention before a Fire or an Explosion migrates beyond control thus reducing lose of life and property.

At the end of the seminar and lunch we topped it off with a plant tour, which I hope everyone enjoyed. Hope to see everyone soon at the next seminars.

Todd Wilson
Asst. Fire Chief
PepsiCo Foods, Peterborough

When procedures are ignored

When we choose not to follow procedures we run the risk of an unwanted incident occurring. This was never truer than on the cold wintry morning of December 6, 1917. Over 1,500 people paid the ultimate price immediately, many thousands more were injured, blinded and before the day wore out, many more would be added to the list of dead.

The procedure not followed was a time honoured "rule of the sea" where ships meeting in open water would pass each other on the starboard or right side. In harbours and other shipping lanes, this was not just a rule, but also a part of a sailor's code of conduct that was only broken by the "*Sailing Dandies*" and foolhardy.

What happened this morning between seasoned sea captains is not fully understood but remains the largest man-made non-nuclear explosion to have occurred in the history of the world?

The place was Halifax Harbour, which at that time, was the starting point for most of the North American convoys sailing supplies, munitions and troops to the European war theatre. Halifax City had a large military population who were not only waiting to embark, but was also garrisoned in Halifax guarding the harbour by patrolling or managing the submarine nets at the harbour entrance. On any given day, there might have been 60 to 70 ships moored or sailing in and out of the harbour. One ship, the *Imo*, a Belgian relief ship was awaiting a load of coal for it's boilers before it left the harbour empty to sail to New York. The coal was late, and the *Imo* was to remain protected behind the submarine nets in Halifax Harbour until the next day. Now Captain Haakon From was behind schedule.

Five days earlier the ship *Mont Blanc* sailed from New York laden with over 2.5 million kilograms of explosives including TNT, wet picric acid and dry picric acid used for artillery, gun cotton and benzol, a gasoline like fuel. In the late afternoon of December 5th, harbour pilot Francis Mackay, boarded the *Mont Blanc* but the ship lay anchored outside the harbour entrance until the next day.

By 07:30 hrs, the *Mont Blanc* was the second ship to enter the harbour mouth and head for mooring where it would find it's place with a convoy gathering further inland in Bedford Basin.

In Bedford basin, the *Imo* raised her anchor and began sailing towards the Narrows, which separated Halifax city from the growing town of Dartmouth before opening to the Atlantic Ocean.

The speed limit for ships in the harbour, Narrows and Bedford Basin was only 5 knots. At 08:15 hrs., a tug boat "*Stella Maris*" pulled away from shore towing two barges. The tug's Captain saw the *Imo* and thought she was going too fast for the Narrows. The tug veered back toward Halifax to avoid *Imo* and *Imo* stayed to port, or the left, in the wrong channel to avoid the *Stella Maris*.

Now the *Imo* faced the *Mont Blanc*. Perhaps due to wartime security, the *Mont Blanc* was not flying the required red flag indicating she was carrying explosives. Nevertheless, *Mont Blanc* blew its whistle once signaling that it was staying its course and the *Imo* should pass on the starboard. The *Imo* blew its whistle twice indicating she would stay as she was. There followed a flurry of whistle blowing and at the last moment, at 08:45 hrs., the *Mont Blanc* turned hard to the left or port, and the *Imo* reversed engines fully. As the next seconds ticked by, both crews watched in horror as the ships collided. The prow of the *Imo* tore into the bow of the *Mont Blanc* tearing open the thin skins of the barrels containing benzol, which ignited immediately. Nearby, was stored the unstable picric acid.

The crew of the *Mont Blanc* abandoned their ship immediately and headed to Dartmouth. As they rowed their lifeboats, they began shouting warnings to others in the area but not enough people spoke

French and their warnings were not understood. The Mont Blanc drifted into the Halifax shoreline to pier 6 spreading burning fuel as she went.

Already on scene the tugboat Stella Maris began working fire hoses on the burning ship. A Royal Navy Captain made two attempts at towing the Mont Blanc away from the pier, but the ship wouldn't budge. At the same time, the Halifax fire department received the alarm and dispatched their 12 fire wagons and their first motorized fire vehicle affectionately called "*Patricia*" to pier 6.

As people busied themselves with the start of their workday and children walked to school, the sight of a burning ship in the harbour drew them toward the piers to watch the spectacle. At 09:04:35 hrs, the Mont Blanc exploded.

Immediately 2 square miles around pier 6 was obliterated, nothing as left standing. Homes, apartments and businesses were flattened including the town's sugar refinery. More than 1900 were killed out right and many more were to die in the next few hours. And it wasn't over yet.

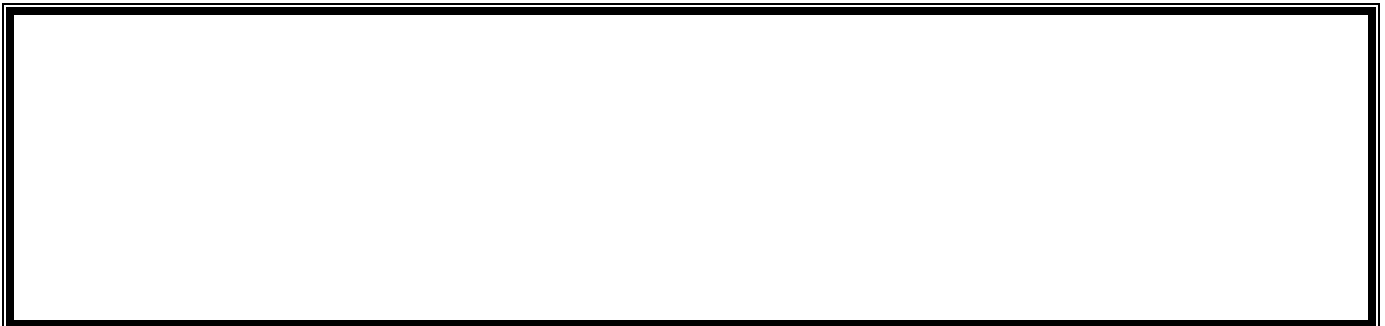
Within minutes dazed survivors who lay injured or were attempting to pick themselves up, were soon awash in a wave of water. The explosion created a tsunami (Japanese for harbour wave) that washed up as high as 18 meters above the high water mark on the Halifax side. The tsunami lifted the Imo unto the Dartmouth shore where she would remain until spring. Soon smoke billowed 20,000 feet in the air over the city.

During this time, debris rained over Halifax and Dartmouth. A cannon barrel crashed five kilometers away in Dartmouth. Over 75 kilometers away widows were shattered and the explosion was heard in Cape Breton over 300 kilometers to the north. Within a few months over 1500 had been buried, more were found in the spring when excavating the site was completed and some were never found.

The toll was devastating. 1,630 homes were destroyed, 12,000 damaged and 6,000 people left without shelter. To add to the misery, the next day saw a blizzard that dropped more than 16 inches of snow over the sooty blackened city.

Had procedures been followed and two ships passed each other on their respective starboard sides, this day in history might never have occurred.

Bret Bailey,
Petro Canada, Mississauga



LAMBTON COLLEGE APPOINTS NEW MANAGER

Dale Wales who has been a faculty member at Lambton College Fire and Emergency Response Training Centre since June 2000 has been appointed as manager of the facility. Dale's responsibilities will include managing the Industrial Fire School, Hazardous Materials Emergency Response and School of Fire Sciences Pre-Service Firefighter Education and Training plus Fire Science Technology programs.

Prior to coming to Lambton College, Dale was a member of the Leamington, Ontario Fire department from 1984 to 2000. With Leamington, Dale held responsibilities as Training/ Public Education Officer and Fire Inspector. He also was an Associate Instructor with the Ontario Fire College and taught various components of the Pre-entry Firefighter training program at St. Clair College in Windsor.

He maintains his affiliation with municipal fire fighting as the Training Officer with the Point Edward Fire and Rescue Service.

Dale looks forward to continuing Lambton's College's relationship with business and industry representatives to meet their Emergency Response Training needs. He can be contacted at 519-336 4552 ext. 30.

**April 27th – Tank Fires
Petro Canada, Oakville**

Seventeen experts and one novice (me) attended an excellent seminar on tank fires put on by the O.I.F.P.A. and hosted by Petro Canada in Oakville. Bruce Hall, our instructor, and host, gave an excellent presentation. He took us through the different types of tanks; floating roofs, fixed roofs and combinations of the two. He explained the advantages and drawbacks of each kind and the challenges facing firefighters in combating fires in them. He went on to explain that there is a formula that tells you how much foam it will take to extinguish a fire in a 150 ft tank. If the formula says that you need 4000 gals of foam and you only have 2000 gals on hand, don't start firefighting. If the additional 2000 haven't arrived by the time you have used your supply, you are very shortly back to square one and still need 4000 gals. The other thing I learned was that on a cryogenic tank, those insulated super cold tanks such as CO₂, Oxygen, and Nitrogen do not spray water on them. They will pick up heat from the water and this will make them vent more furiously.

All in all, a great seminar! Syd Hopkins

Thank you to PepsiCo Foods, Peterborough and Petro Canada, Oakville for hosting our seminars.