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Three workers who died in cargo ship succumbed to toxic gases

Apr 14, 2015

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Three dockworkers who died while cleaning out the hold of a ship in the Waasland harbour in Beveren at the weekend were the victims of toxic gases created by the coal the ship was carrying, the East Flanders prosecutor's office has announced.

The three men, all experienced dockworkers in their 50s, had been sent to carry out a final clean-up of the Saga Frontier's hold after its cargo had been unloaded. They were working for the trans-shipment company Euroports, situated in the Waasland harbour on the left bank of the river Scheldt. They were discovered unconscious by colleagues, who called emergency services. Attempts to revive the men failed.

"An autopsy has shown that the three workers died of suffocation after breathing in gases," said Eva Brantegem, spokesperson for the prosecutor's office. "We await the results of a toxicological examination to find out which gases exactly were concerned."

In the meantime, safety inspectors will visit the scene; owners Euroports pledged to co-operate fully with the investigation. "We, too, have a lot of questions," CEO Paul-Jacobs Bins told VTM News. "If there's anything that has to be changed, we want to do that immediately. We don't want to go through this ever again."

The company held information sessions for staff and promised psychological counselling for them, as well as for family and friends of the three victims.

photo courtesy Gazet van Antwerpen



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