

# Faubourg Marigny Improvement Association

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is the Esplanade / Governor Nicholls Wharf Port of New Orleans Cold Storage facility?**

This proposed facility will be an industrial complex built by the Port of New Orleans in order to expand the capacity of the New Orleans Cold Storage plant. The company, currently located in New Orleans East on Jourdan Road and the Industrial Canal, wants to expand their capacity with a new facility.

The proposed facility will take over the space that is currently the Governor Nicholls Street and Esplanade Avenue Wharfs located adjacent to the French Quarter and Faubourg Marigny.

### **Will this facility greatly increase traffic in and around the Marigny and French Market?**

The port authority has indicated that there will be a maximum of 100 18-wheeled trucks entering and exiting the facility daily. During a typical eight (8) hour work day, that is a truck entering or exiting the facility every 2.4 minutes. They have two shifts, day and night.

All trucks will have to take a left hand turn against traffic, across North Peters Street to enter the facility and cross a set of freight tracks from the New Orleans Public Belt (NOPB) railway. Freight trains use the tracks in front of the facility frequently during the day and usually take an average time of five (5) to ten (10) minutes to pass. That means there will be considerable congestion and back-up of tractor trailers on Elysian Fields Avenue and Esplanade Avenue even if there were no other vehicles on the roads.

### **What problems will this new traffic create?**

The increased traffic at the intersection of Elysian Fields, Esplanade and North Peters will potentially back up into the surrounding areas, which will result in idling tractor trailers and other vehicles in and around the French Market, around the US Mint Building on Esplanade Ave and up Elysian Fields Ave towards St. Claude Ave.

The Port of New Orleans study did not accurately reflect the problems that may arise at key intersections and did not address the problems that will occur due to trucks having to both turn left across traffic to enter the facility as well as turn left to enter I-10.

Traffic problems in this area will affect traffic flow throughout both the Faubourg Marigny and the French Quarter as this intersection plays a major role in the traffic patterns down Decatur and North

Peters streets along with traffic crossing Elysian Field through the Faubourg Marigny. These areas are very high traffic areas for bicyclists, tourists and residents.

### **How will this affect air quality around the facility?**

Large amounts of truck traffic, especially through port areas because of frequent idling and heavy loads, are notorious for being very pollutant and harmful to adjacent neighborhoods. And, people are just beginning to understand the facts about the effects of diesel truck pollution, especially in high concentrations, on surrounding neighborhoods.

In 2008 the California Air Resources Board estimated that pollution from truck traffic alone at the Port of Los Angeles causes an estimated \$100 - \$590 million annually in health impact costs.

The traffic entering and exiting the Esplanade / Governor Nicholls Wharf area will be even more pollutant than normal 18 wheelers because they will be transporting partially frozen goods that require the trucks to be constantly idling and producing power for their refrigerators.

In addition to pollution from the diesel trucks that service the facility, there will be a significant increase in the amount of vessels servicing the wharf. Those vessels will also be constantly idling to produce power for their own large freezer units.

Diesel fumes, in high concentrations also have a well documented and negative effect on the integrity of building facades. This problem is exacerbated in buildings made of stone, mortar and brick, where the fumes can both permanently stain and harm the structural integrity of the building. In historic areas like the French Quarter and Faubourg Marigny, building repair costs could be greatly increased due to the negative effects of diesel pollution.

### **What potential environment dangers exist as a result of the facility?**

There are two forms of environmental dangers inherent in working with toxic gases and heavy industry. The first is a slow leak contamination, in which small amounts of toxins released from machinery can injure employees or contaminate the environment. The other potential danger is a catastrophic leak, fire or other major compromise of the tanks and machinery holding the toxins.

Most at risk from such a leak would be people in the area immediately adjacent to the facility, including those in the Old US Mint building and Hotel Monnaie.

In addition to the risk of toxic leaks from the facility itself, trucks entering and exiting the facility will have to cross the New Orleans Public Belt railroad tracks and the weight of these trucks on the rails pose a significant risk to integrity and greatly increase the possibility of train derailment.

### **What are the dangers of an anhydrous ammonia leak?**

Anhydrous Ammonia is a toxic gas used under high pressures in industrial refrigeration that, if released at high quantities, will cause serious injury and death. Any leaks or discharges from the facility will likely be blown by winds off of the river into the residential and tourist neighborhoods of the French Quarter

and the Faubourg Marigny. Both of these areas are densely populated and will be challenging to evacuate quickly, due to narrow roads and large tourist areas.

When ammonia comes in contact with water, as when exposed to humid air or rain, it creates a caustic substance that is corrosive to the eyes, nose, mouth, throat, lungs and skin of humans and animals.

Current regulations allow for leaks of up to 50lbs of ammonia from facilities without having to report the leak to authorities.

### **Have anhydrous ammonia leaks happened before? Are they harmful?**

Yes, ammonia leaks do happen, but aren't necessarily reported.

Ammonia leaks have happened recently causing forced evacuations in Shreveport and sending eighteen (18) workers to the hospital in Wichita, Kansas last year. And in March of 2009 a leak in Connecticut sent twenty (20) people to the hospital. This proposed heavy industrial facility in New Orleans will be in a residential/ tourist area and the consequences of a large scale anhydrous ammonia leak would be catastrophic.

### **What makes the Esplanade / Governor Nicholls Wharf site especially dangerous for boat traffic?**

The Governor Nicholls and Esplanade Wharfs reside on an especially dangerous section of the river, near turns at Algiers Point. This section of waterway has long been regarded as one of the most difficult to navigate. This is the same stretch of hard-to-navigate waterway as where the Bright Field crashed in 1996.

In a crash report the National Transportation Safety Board remarked of Algiers point that "there is little margin for error in navigating" and the Coast Guard has called this stretch of the Mississippi the "most dangerous on the river".

Adding to the number of ships that have to navigate this section, along with the inclusion of toxic chemicals within the wharf structure, dramatically increases the dangers of a ship impacting the wharf and causing an anhydrous ammonia release from the refrigeration equipment.

### **Were other locations considered?**

According to the Port of New Orleans, they have looked at several other options for the project, most of which are not in heavily residential areas and therefore pose a significantly reduced risk to the health and welfare of residential and tourist populations.

The Port of New Orleans did not consider environmental or health hazards to citizens when ruling out alternative sites. Evaluating locations based only on criteria relevant to the Port's business objectives is not only self serving, but ignores the long term costs to the community and neighborhood infrastructure. The Governor Nicholls / Esplanade Wharf site was simply the quickest and cheapest short term solution. It **is not** the best solution for the residents and business people of the French Quarter and Faubourg Marigny.

**Is the FMIA in opposition to the relocation of a cold storage facility anywhere?**

No, the FMIA and the residents of the Faubourg Marigny recognize the need for the expansion of the cold storage facility as an important economic step towards the future. However, the location chosen is not in the best interest of the people of New Orleans, and poses significant risks that could be mitigated if the facility was built elsewhere. A more stable, long term solution would be to build the plant in an area better suited for this sort of heavy industrial activity.

**Will New Orleans Cold Storage be unable to operate if they can't relocate to the Esplanade / Governor Nicholls Wharf site? Won't this hurt the local economy?**

There are a number of sites that are available that are located in industrial areas suitable for this expansion of the New Orleans Cold Storage facility. This includes sites further down the Mississippi that may reduce the costs to shippers wishing to access the facility, making long term costs much lower than that of the proposed site adjacent to the French Quarter and Marigny.

**What can I do to help the FMIA in opposing the construction of this facility in the Marigny?**

Get the word out! Let the Port of New Orleans, your two Senators [Mary Landrieu](#) and [David Vitter](#) and [Governor Jindal](#) know that we don't want this disruptive and potentially dangerous facility in the center of a vibrant tourist area and historical residential neighborhoods. Tell them you don't want the hazardous pollution from the trucks and large vessels, the hassle from the traffic or the danger from the possibility of an anhydrous ammonia leak. Tell them you want smart riverfront development, not a step backwards towards heavy industrial usage.

You can also donate to the FMIA and their opposition of the Riverfront Cold Storage Facility at [faubourgmarnigny.org](#) and [nocoldnola.org](#)