# Collision between oil tanker and cargo ship sparks environmental disaster in North Sea



A substantial maritime incident occurred on Monday, 9 October 2023, in the North Sea approximately 12 miles off the East Yorkshire coast, involving the US-flagged oil tanker MV Stena Immaculate and the Portuguese-registered cargo ship MV Solong. The crash, which happened at around 9:48 AM, resulted in a catastrophic fire and significant environmental concerns as thousands of litres of jet fuel spilled into the sea.

The collision unfolded when the MV Solong, which was travelling from the Scottish port of Grangemouth to Rotterdam at about 16 knots, struck the stationary MV Stena Immaculate, which was anchored while awaiting a berth at the Killingholmeport on the River Humber. Witnesses described the Solong's approach as a surprise, with one sailor from the Stena Immaculate remarking, "the Solong came from out of the blue." It is currently unclear how the collision occurred, although visibility conditions were poor due to fog and haze.

Following the impact, both ships were engulfed in flames, leaving them smouldering wrecks by Tuesday afternoon. The Stena Immaculate was reported to be carrying up to 220,000 barrels of Jet A1 fuel, primarily intended for US military operations. Experts suggest that most of the fuel onboard has burned off, although concerns remain regarding the environmental implications of the incident. The structural damage to the Stena Immaculate includes a substantial gash on its side, with water pouring in.

A total of 36 crew members from the two vessels were successfully rescued; however, one sailor from the Solong remains missing and is presumed dead. An extensive search operation for this crew member has been called off, with authorities expressing their condolences to the missing sailor's family. On Tuesday, Humberside Police announced the arrest of a 59-year-old man on suspicion of gross negligence manslaughter related to the incident. Detective Chief Superintendent Craig Nicholson stated that the police are taking the lead on any potential criminal offences that may arise from this collision.

As the situation unfolds, environmental experts have labelled the incident an "immediate environmental disaster." The spill poses risks to local ecosystems, especially as it occurred near protected habitats for seabirds and marine wildlife. Ecologist Martin Slater and representatives from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds have voiced concerns about the potential long-term environmental impact. Contingency measures are being discussed to aid wildlife that may be affected, with emergency protocols activated for injured birds expected to wash ashore.

The MV Solong, which is currently drifting and on fire, is being towed by tugboats as its future remains uncertain. The cargo ship reportedly had empty containers that previously held sodium cyanide, which was initially feared to be aboard at the time of the crash. However, the ship's owners confirmed that no hazardous materials were present during the incident.

Local authorities and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency are actively responding to the disaster, while investigations have commenced to determine how such an incident could occur in a busy shipping area. The UK Government is monitoring air quality and potential environmental impacts, with a statement indicating that while the situation is dynamic, all necessary resources are in place to respond effectively.

As salvage operations begin to assess and mitigate the damage, the maritime community and environmental organisations are scrutinising the events that led to this collision, seeking answers to prevent similar tragedies in the future. Further updates on the investigation and environmental assessments are expected as authorities continue to manage the aftermath of this significant maritime disaster.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://theaviationist.com/2025/03/10/north-sea-collision/> - This article corroborates the collision between MV Solong and MV Stena Immaculate, detailing the incident's impact and response efforts.
* <https://www.twz.com/news-features/tanker-that-exploded-in-north-sea-collision-one-of-10-in-u-s-fuel-delivery-program> - This source confirms that MV Stena Immaculate was part of a U.S. fuel delivery program and provides details about the incident's implications for U.S. military operations.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This is the original source of the article, though it does not provide additional external corroboration beyond the text itself.
* [https://www.marinetraffic.com/en/ais/details/ships/shipid:5331415/mmsi:255806000/imo:9776615/vessel:STENA%20IMMACULATE](https://www.marinetraffic.com/en/ais/details/ships/shipid%3A5331415/mmsi%3A255806000/imo%3A9776615/vessel%3ASTENA%20IMMACULATE) - MarineTraffic provides real-time AIS data that can confirm the location and status of vessels like MV Stena Immaculate.
* <https://www.rspb.org.uk/> - The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is mentioned as voicing concerns about the environmental impact, and their website could provide further information on their stance.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/maritime-and-coastguard-agency> - The Maritime and Coastguard Agency is involved in responding to the disaster, and their website may offer updates on their efforts and investigations.
* <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14486787/man-arrested-manslaughter-oil-tanker-crash.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data