

# Series of workplace incidents at ports around the world highlights serious global safety issues for dockworkers

Joshua Rodriguez  
16 August 2024

Over the past week, a series of workplace incidents at some of the busiest ports around the world have highlighted major safety issues in the world's shipping infrastructure.

In the late hours of August 9th, an American crane operator at the ITS port of Long Beach, California suffered minor injuries after the crane cab in which he was operating disconnected and fell 40 ft. onto a cargo ship below.

The crane operator, who goes by the name of Crane Daddy on TikTok, is expected to fully recover from his injuries; however, it is very clear that this incident could have been far worse, even deadly. If the crane operator had disconnected where there was no cargo below him, he could have potentially fallen more than 100 ft.

On the very same day, a container carrying hazardous material exploded on the *YM Mobility*, while it was docked at the Ningbo-Zhoushan port in China.

Investigations by official authorities believe that the explosion was caused by a fire which was ignited by lithium batteries and tert-butyl peroxybenzoate, a compound that needs to be stored at low temperatures. These were stored on the same vessel as other hazardous materials which then caught fire and exploded.

It is believed that the refrigerated container holding the hazardous material which started the fire could have malfunctioned and failed to keep the hazardous material under a safe temperature.

Local temperatures around Ningbo were reported to be extremely high, reaching as far up to 100 degrees fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius).

There were no reported deaths or injuries and the

incident is still under investigation, but the incident recalls the tragic Beirut port fire in Lebanon which ignited two explosions and led to hundreds of deaths and injuries back in August of 2020.

On August 11, another cargo ship, the *MSC Capetown III*, caught on fire and caused an explosion shortly after the ship berthed at the Jaya Container Terminal (JCT) at the Port of Colombo in Sri Lanka. There were no reported deaths or injuries and port authorities are still investigating the source of the fire.

These dangerous incidents highlight the decrepit conditions that exist in ports all around the world, due to relentless cost-cutting which subordinates safety to profit.

The refusal of the multinational corporations to update and modernize essential infrastructure needed to maintain the global supply chain, has resulted in the culmination of preventable workplace incidents which have killed and injured many.

A Canadian dock worker told the WSWs: "I can't speak for any other ports but in our port we are just an obstacle in their way of automation. They don't care about our safety or well-being in any way. They don't want us working on the dock. They want automated container carriers and automated yard cranes."

"They only fix machinery when it breaks down it seems and even then it's just patched together enough to start rolling again. We rush our lives everyday and we are treated like low life bottom feeders."

The spate of accidents around the world underscores that the fight for decent working conditions is a global struggle. Workers all around the world are facing the same multinational shipping corporations, and the ports themselves are all nodes in a single world logistics

network.



To contact the WSWs and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**