



Noord Natie Terminals has expanded considerably since it was established, during which time it has built up a reputation for flexibility and customer commitment

A flexible facility

Noord Natie Terminals was established in Antwerp and has since expanded its customer base through investment in new facilities and in upgrading existing equipment and systems. Reflecting this growth, plans for an expansion at the site are well developed, including the addition of two new jetties.

The terminal employs 78 people and has a total capacity of over 225,000m³ in 190 fully serviced tanks with capacities from 22m³ to 8,300m³. Chemicals, oleochemicals and base oils form the major part of the products handled at the facility, with animal and vegetable oils, biodiesel and other mineral oils making up most of the balance.

The company has built its reputation on its flexible approach to new products and changing customer requirements. Underlining this, Martine Teeuwens, managing director of Noord Natie and sister company Antwerp for Storage (A4S), says: "Flexibility is our brand. This results in greater efficiency at the terminal both for Noord Natie and its customers."

EXPANSION PLANS

An engineering study has recently been completed on an additional 28,600m³ capacity (see visual). Plans include two tank pits, one with six tanks of 1,800m³ and the other with six of 1,800m³ and seven at 1,000m³. Two additional jetties are included, one for sea-going vessels and the other for barges. Jetties will be linked to provide flexible ship and barge loading and each of the tank pits will have facilities for truck and train car loading.

The permit for the expansion covers all types of dangerous chemicals. The tanks will be built in a mixture of mild and stainless steel, most in stainless, with dedicated product and vapour return lines. "We envisaged a mixture of hazardous and non-hazardous products from the outset," says Teeuwens. "But we have built in the highest specifications for the majority of the tanks – with tank-dedicated lines – to provide greater flexibility."

To improve the flow of trucks through the terminal, further loading facilities have been added across the whole site and impermeable layers have been incorporated in the roadways at all loading points, resulting in the ability to handle more trucks daily.

"Investment in our truck loading facilities has created loading bays which are as close as possible to the tanks. This means that more trucks can be handled as there is no

single, central loading bay," says Teeuwens.

The majority of product arrives in bulk by sea-going vessel and is then split for onward transportation by truck, train and barge. Some product is stored in containers at the site, and some product is drummed out of storage tanks, trucks or containers.

Teeuwens notes that there has been a rise in the volume of chemicals transported by railcar. There has also been an increase in the amount of ship-to-barge and barge-to-ship handling of product. The terminal now has four berths connected by transfer lines for loading and discharge and an additional two "lay-by" berths that allow vessels to remain at the terminal once they are unloaded should their schedule demand.

A4S occupies a modern building on the site with state-of-the-art storage and handling systems for hazardous goods. Established as a joint venture, Noord Natie now owns 100% of A4S. "The board of directors of both companies is now common," says Teeuwens.

"However, A4S has dedicated personnel as the products and equipment used to handle them are different. Tank occupancy at A4S is good. All product is held in stainless steel and is delivered by all types of transport with distribution mainly by truck or rail. All tanks at the site have dedicated lines for truck, railcar and vessel loading." The 13 tanks have a capacity of 9,000m³ and can additionally fill drums and intermediate bulk containers either from tanks or directly from trucks, containers or railcars.

LAND AVAILABLE

Land is still available at the site for further expansion and talks are under way with a company which plans to construct a cogeneration plant using pure vegetable oil as its energy source. The facility will produce electricity for around 150,000 families and is expected to be operational in 2010. "Work could start as early as next year," says Teeuwens.

The cogeneration plant would use oil stored at the terminal, and would return steam for tank heating and cleaning of tanks and pipelines at the terminal. "The siting of such a plant could also attract more vegetable oil suppliers who may be interested in storing their product at Noord Natie Terminals," she adds.

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