



For all life's journeys

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NP RESPONDS TO ISSUES RAISED BY THE OWTU IN THE WAKE OF INCIDENT

Reference is made to the Press Conference hosted by the President General of the OWTU on Monday 14th December 2020 in the wake of the explosion which took place at NP, Sea Lots, POS on Friday 11th December 2020.

The Trinidad & Tobago National Petroleum Marketing Company Limited (NP) has made the public commitment to conduct a thorough investigation into the matter, via an independent 3rd party, and in light of the issues raised, the Company takes this opportunity to respond and provide clarification on these issues. **As a responsible state enterprise, NP takes very seriously the health and safety of its employees as well as the safe and efficient execution of its responsibilities, while placing great emphasis on maintaining best practice safety protocols as evidenced by our recent acquisition of STOW Certification.**

In the wake of Friday's incident and recognising that the employees would have been vulnerable to trauma and anxiety in the wake of the explosion, **all employees, except for a few in critical areas, were allowed to leave the premises and head home, once the all clear was given by T&T Fire Services.** Furthermore, understanding our responsibility to provide fuel to the public so as not to create uncertainty, as an interim measure, fuel distribution was conducted out of NP's Point-a-Pierre operations last Friday and over the weekend.

Moreover, arrangements were immediately put in place through the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), for staff members to access EAP services through the hotline. Additionally, the Company **implemented Critical Incident Stress De-briefing sessions, with an EAP Officer being specifically brought in and stationed at NP House for the duration of the day,** today Monday 14th December 2020.

In their communication to the media, the OWTU sought to give the erroneous impression of an alleged attempt to intentionally compromise the investigation by covering-up some of the findings. This accusation is baseless and is far from the truth. Site inspections and investigations commenced immediately after the incident on Friday, by the relevant regulatory bodies, and over the course of the weekend.

Upon visiting the affected area, **the Regulatory Authorities (OSHA / T&T Fire Service) reviewed, accepted and approved the risk assessment, which was done by an independent 3rd party, and released the area for the Company to commence the sequence of restorative works detailed on the work plan.** Upon completion of the restorative works, the Regulatory Authority (OSHA) was notified and acknowledged receipt, of the Company's intent to resume operations, without any objections.

Furthermore, **in the spirit of transparency and to keep the Union abreast of the unfolding investigation, two (2) of the OWTU's Branch Representatives would have accompanied NP's Management in a Walkabout in the affected area, this morning, just prior to the OWTU's media conference.** Immediately following the walkabout as part of the closing meeting for the walkabout, **in the presence of the Union's Representatives,** the Management team facilitated an interactive Q&A session with the employees in the operational areas, where their concerns were addressed, and they were given the assurance that all contingency measures were in place, before operations started this morning.

As it relates to the Health and Safety Committee, **the Company has an established Joint Health Safety Security Committee (JHSSEC) of which the Union's Branch representatives are a part, and which typically meets on a monthly basis.** However, the advent of COVID-19 created an unsettled period, and like many organisations, over the last few months the Company has been adjusting and has given precedence to instituting health and safety guidelines as recommended by the health authorities. As a consequence, the unsettled period resulted in the temporary suspension of these meetings, but the meetings have since resumed as of 2020 November 26, where the Union was also well represented.

On the matter of the roadworthiness of the Road Tank Wagons (RTWs) raised by the OWTU on **2020 October 14th, as part of the investigative process, a joint team inclusive of NP's Management and the OWTU's Branch representatives was convened and although the report has been completed, it is still awaiting the signature of the Union's Branch representatives before it can be circulated.** This situation is not uncommon, and it is in instances like these that the Company advocates for better communication between the OWTU Executive and the OWTU Branch representatives.

As it relates to the Company's operations, in an effort to ensure that the motoring public receives a regular and adequate supply of fuel, NP's business model requires a healthy mixture of Company and independent Contractors. **All Contractors are subjected to a rigorous pre-qualification and tendering process for projects before being selected.** In the case of the fuel distribution fleet, due to factors, including but not limited to distance, site configuration and other operational requirements, NP supplements its Company fleet with Contractor-operated Road Tank Wagons (RTWs) to service particular Service Station sites to ensure the continuity of supply on a daily basis throughout Trinidad.

Incidentally, **although the cost of an NP-operated RTW exceeds the cost of Contractor haulage per litre, our records confirm that the current split for deliveries to Service Stations is 54:46, in favor of NP-operated RTWs,** a progressive improvement over the past few years, a verifiable fact that was shared with the OWTU's Executive as recently as this past September 2020. The Company wishes to assure the public that the operation of the RTWs does not in any way pose an unnecessary safety risk to the lives of the workers or the public at large.

NP's Management shares the same objectives with the OWTU and continues to be open to mutually beneficial dialogue while remaining amenable to working together in the best interests of the employees, with the ultimate goal of the Company fulfilling its mandate.

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For further information:

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