



The container ship MSC Danit is seen the day after U.S. Coast Guard and National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) marine casualty investigators boarded the container ship, off the Port of Long Beach, California, U.S. October 17, 2021. REUTERS/David Swanson

NTSB to Determine Cause of Southern California Oil Spill After Anchor Strikes on Pipeline

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The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) will hold a virtual public board meeting next month to determine the probable cause of a [crude oil release](#) that occurred after anchor strikes on an underwater pipeline in San Pedro Bay near Huntington Beach, California.

On October 1, 2021, crude oil began leaking from a crack that had developed in an underwater pipeline. The pipeline was shut down after oil

was spotted on the surface of the water. According to the NTSB, approximately 588 barrels of oil leaked from the pipeline.

Investigations later revealed that the pipeline had been dragged by a ship's anchor likely during a storm on January 25, 2021, more than 9 months prior to the discovery of the oil spill. Surprisingly, the incident was never reported, and the pipeline remained uninspected until oil began washing up on Southern California beaches in early October 2021.

Further examination by divers uncovered that a portion of the pipeline had been displaced by about 100 feet on the seafloor, with a 16-inch crack located approximately 4.7 miles west of Huntington Beach. Two containerships, *MSC Danit* and *Beijing*, were identified as [parties of interest](#) in the initial anchor dragging incident.

The incident occurred as the San Pedro Bay anchorages were packed with ships waiting to enter the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach amid the pandemic-induced imports surge that overwhelmed the nation's supply chains and created an unprecedented backup off Southern California ports.

MSC Mediterranean Shipping Company, the operator of *MSC Danit*, announced in April that it had [settled claims](#) with the subrogate insurers of Amplify Energy, the owner and operator of the pipeline. The *Beijing* is owned by Costamare and chartered to China's COSCO.

At the time of the settlement, MSC said the amount would be jointly funded by MSC and Costamare without admission of responsibility or liability for the environmental damage.

Amplify Energy disclosed separately that it had received \$85 million in net proceeds from the vessels that were believed to have struck the pipeline. The company last year agreed to plead guilty to criminal negligence charges and [pay nearly \\$13 million](#) related to the spill after it was discovered that the company continued to operate the pipeline for hours after leak alarms went off and then improperly restarted the pipeline after it had been shut down.

At the meeting, which will take place December 5, NTSB board members will discuss safety issues associated with the incident. They will also vote on the probable cause and findings related to the crude oil release, as well as provide any necessary safety recommendations.