Newsclips

Photo courtesy Bert Verkest via social media

Fire Erupts on Car Carrier with Electric Vehicles in Belgian Port of Zeebrugge

Mike Schuler April 17, 2025

A fire broke out Wednesday afternoon aboard a car carrier reportedly carrying 110 electric vehicles in Belgium's Port of Zeebrugge's outer harbor.

The blaze originated on one of the cargo decks of the *M/V Delphine*, according to Zeebrugge Mayor Dirk De Fauw. The full extent of the fire remained unclear as of Wednesday evening.

Emergency response teams immediately implemented safety protocols, including evacuating the crew and activating the ship's automatic firefighting system.

Tugboats were deployed to contain the fire while federal police established a security perimeter around the affected area.

Emergency services were alerted to the fire at approximately 15:00 CET. Firefighting vessels worked for hours to combat the blaze at Britannia Dock.

A Port of Antwerp-Bruges spokesperson confirmed that operations in the remainder of the harbor continue unaffected. Favorable wind conditions pushed smoke out to sea, minimizing potential impacts on land-based activities.

No injuries have been reported in the incident.

The *M/V Delphine*, built in 2018 and operated by European logistics and short sea shipping provider CLdN, is known for being the world's largest short sea roll-on/roll-off vessel with a cargo capacity of 8,000 lane meters. In 2023, it was fitted with two Norsepower rotors sails to reduce fuel consumption by harnessing the power of the wind.

This incident adds to a growing list of maritime fires involving electric vehicles, highlighting ongoing concerns about the challenges of fighting fires involving lithium-ion batteries at sea.

The Port of Zeebrugge, part of the merged Port of Antwerp-Bruges, is one of Europe's principal automotive handling ports, serving as a crucial hub for vehicle imports and exports.

World Shipping Council urges constructive solutions following USTR port fee announcement

By Maritime Magazine   2025 April 18

The World Shipping Council (WSC) today voiced serious concerns regarding the port fee regime announced by the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), cautioning that the measures targeting Chinese maritime dominance could undermine American trade, hurt U.S. producers, and weaken efforts to strengthen the nation's maritime industry. The measures

"Revitalizing America's maritime sector is an important and widely shared goal — one that requires a long-term, legislative and industrial strategy. We welcomed the vision outlined in the President's Executive Order, which proposes targeted initiatives to strengthen U.S. shipbuilding, ports, and supply chain resilience. Unfortunately, the fee regime announced by USTR is a step in the wrong direction as it will raise prices for consumers, weaken U.S. trade and do little to revitalize the U.S. maritime industry," said Joe Kramek, President and CEO of the World Shipping Council.

The World Shipping Council outlined several key concerns:

- **Retroactive Port Fees:** Applying fees to vessels that are already on the water offers no support for U.S. shipbuilding and, instead, risks harming American exporters — particularly farmers — at a time when global trade is facing significant strain. These backward-looking penalties disrupt long-term investment planning, introducing new costs and unpredictability for American businesses and consumers.

- **Fees Calculated on NT:** Structuring fees based on ship size — Net Tonnage (NT) — disproportionately penalizes larger, more efficient vessels that deliver essential goods, including components used in U.S. production lines. Nearly half of all liner shipping imports to the U.S. are used directly in domestic production processes. Increasing the cost of these shipments will reverberate through the supply chain, raising production costs for American businesses and, ultimately, for consumers. It will also penalize U.S. ports, who have made significant investments to expand their capacity to attract and handle the largest container ships serving the trade.

- **Fees on car carriers:** Additionally, the USTR actions this week included a new and previously unannounced fee based on Car Equivalent Unit (CEU) capacity for almost every vehicle carrier in the world. This arbitrary action, targeting all foreign-built vessels, will further slow U.S. economic growth and raise automobile prices for American consumers, while doing little to encourage U.S maritime investment.

- **Legal and Strategic Concerns:** WSC also flagged significant legal concerns, noting that the proposed fees appear to extend beyond the authority granted under U.S. trade law.

The WSC is urging the Administration to reconsider this counterproductive measure, which risks harming U.S. consumers, manufacturers, and farmers without delivering meaningful progress toward revitalizing the U.S. maritime industry.

A Call for Constructive Solutions

The World Shipping Council reaffirmed its commitment to working collaboratively with the Administration and industry stakeholders on solutions that can truly strengthen the U.S. maritime sector. Constructive pathways — such as targeted investment incentives, infrastructure improvements, and streamlined regulatory processes — can deliver lasting benefits without disrupting U.S. trade or raising costs for American producers and consumers.

It is also important to recognize that the U.S. shipbuilding sector already faces significant constraints, including a backlog of military orders and ongoing labor shortages. Similarly, a shortage of trained and certified U.S. mariners limits the potential to expand U.S.-flag shipping, even if the regulatory environment was improved.

WSC members are proud to be integral contributors to the U.S. economy and maritime community. Liner shipping moves 65% of U.S. seaborne trade, contributes more than $2 trillion annually to the U.S. economy, and supports 6.4 million American jobs paying more than $420 billion in wages. WSC members also represent 75% of the vessels enrolled in the U.S. Maritime Security Program and bring significant shipbuilding experience and expertise to the U.S. maritime sector.

“The World Shipping Council remains fully committed to supporting U.S. efforts to revitalize the American maritime industry,” Mr. Kramek concluded. “We urge policymakers to pursue strategies that encourage growth, strengthen supply chain resilience, and avoid actions that risk harming American exporters, producers, and consumers at a time when global trade is already under pressure.”

Canadian Great Lakes carriers exempted from USTR levies on China-built vessels

By Maritime Magazine   2025 April 18

In announcing watered down measures from a February proposal for port fees on China-built vessels in order to revive American shipbuilding, the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Thursday also accorded a reprieve to owners of vessels servicing the Great Lakes, the Caribbean and U.S. territories.

The was notably positive news for senior representatives of Canadian Great Lakes shipping firms who had testified during March public hearings of the USTR, underscoring the need to protect inland and coastal shipping as well as the integrated North American supply chain. They affirmed that the port fees would make shortsea shipping economically unfeasible, render many products and commodities more costly, and shift cargo to already overburdened railways and highways.

In what had sent shock waves through the global shipping industry and U.S. port circles, the USTR had initially proposed fees of up to $1.5 million per port call of a Chinese-built ship.
Rather than a flat individual fee on large vessels, the USTR has now opted to charge fees based on net tonnage or each container unloaded. T his was, in fact, recommended by operators of small ships and transporters of such bulk commodities as iron ore.

As of October 14, Chinese-built and owned ships will be charged $50 per net ton, a rate that is to increase by $30 annually over the next three years.

Such a scheme will apply if the fee is higher than an alternative calculation method charging $120 for each container discharged, rising to $250 after three years.

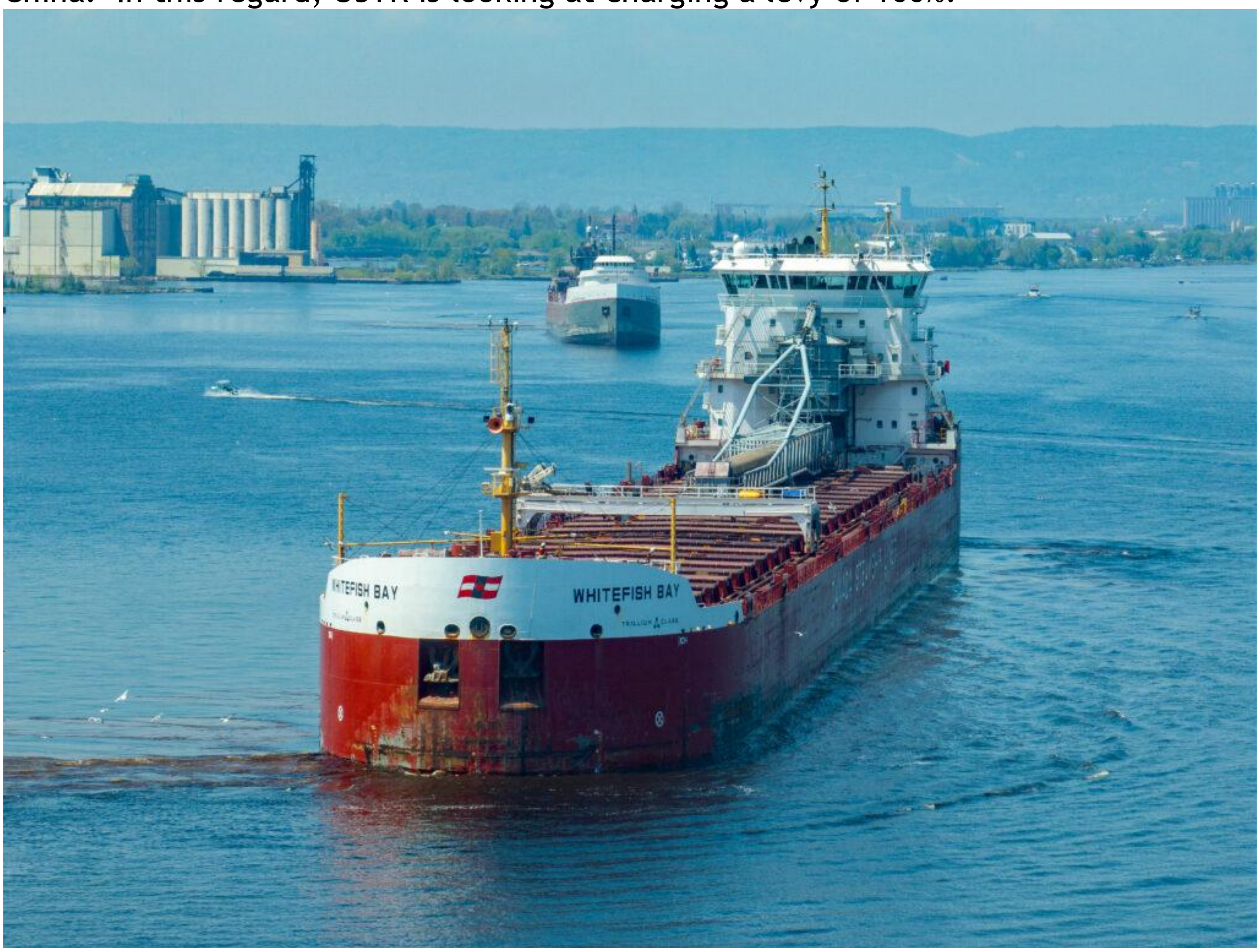
“Ships and shipping are vital to American economic security and the free flow of commerce,” U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said in a press release. “The Trump administration’s actions will begin to reverse Chinese dominance, address threats to the U.S. supply chain, and send a demand signal for U.S.-built ships.”

Vessel owners can be eligible for a remission of the fees if they can provide proof of a U.S. shipbuilding order. The remission of the fee would be based on a net tonnage capacity of equal to or less than the U.S. built vessel ordered. “If a prospective vessel owner does not take delivery of the U.S.-built vessel ordered within three years, the fees will become due immediately,” the USTR report said.

Foreign roll-on/roll-off auto carriers would be are eligible for refunds of fees if they order or take delivery of a U.S.-built vessel of equivalent capacity in the next three years.

Gor LNG carriers, the USTR set a long timeline. They must move 1% of U.S. LNG exports on U.S.-built, operated and flagged vessels within four years. That percentage climbs to 4% by 2035 and to 15% by 2047.

Meanwhile, at a May 19 scheduled hearing, the USTR plans to discuss proposed tariffs on ship-to-shore cranes – a manufacturing sector largely dominated by China. In this regard, USTR is looking at charging a levy of 100%.



(Photo of US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer and David Schauer photo of Canada Steamship Lines vessel calling the Port of Duluth Minnesota)

What to do with steel, grain shipments?

Impact of Trump tariffs piling up in Windsor

WINDSOR, ON – Shipments of steel from eastern Europe and Canadian aluminum is being warehoused rather than forwarded to the U.S. where it faces tariffs. “We’re seeing the impact already,” said Windsor Port Authority CEO/president Steve Salmons.

“The companies are waiting to see what will happen with tariffs rather than pay 25 per cent. It makes it uncompetitive. “Salt isn’t being shipped to the U.S.. It would double in price.”

Salmons added tariffs have also affected grain shipments out of Windsor. Instead of being sent to Ohio for use to feed livestock, grain is finding new markets in Europe. “About 80 per cent of the grain that goes through here, goes to the U.S.,” Salmons said. “It’ll now going elsewhere where there’s no tariffs.
“Shipping adds some cost, but nowhere near 25 per cent.”

Salmons said Canada already serves as a transshipping point for the world accessing U.S. markets. Vancouver is the largest port on North America’s west coast and bigger than all but two U.S. ports.

“All these products will now face a tariff going into the U.S.,” Salmons said. “It will result in fewer products being shipped. We’ve already had a couple shipments of steel cancelled.”

Salmons said the reduction in steel/aluminum shipments will soon begin to jam up the automotive supply chain. There are already backlogs for aluminum in the U.S., most of which is coming from Canada.

Steel coils are another key automotive component that flows through the port of Windsor.

“There’s a domino effect in the supply chain,” Salmons said.

“The steel coils directed through Windsor get a highly specialized coating at a local treatment plant that’s needed for use in the auto industry.

“This type of treatment plant (ArcelorMittal Windsor) doesn’t exist in the U.S. There’s no alternate source.”

Salmons expects to see countries begin to more frequently by-pass the U.S. and ship directly to Canadian markets to distribute their products in this country to avoid incurring tariffs.

One such company is Swiss chocolate maker Lindt. It moved production for the Canadian market out of the U.S. and now supplies Canada from its European plants.

Salmon noted the trade war highlights how important the current expansion of the Windsor Port Authority has become. The expansion will give Windsor the capability of handling container vessels and will become operational in 2028.

"This will open up markets for our local manufacturers and other businesses," Salmon said. "A lot of them don't have access to Europe because they can't ship their products.

"We have so manufacturing and potential we can tap into once the port is expanded."

Though auto tariffs have caused the Windsor Assembly Plant to shut down for two weeks resulting in thousands of layoffs, Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce Ryan Donally said the full impact of U.S. President Donald Trump's tariffs is still working its way through the local economy.

"We're just glad the focus of the ire of his trade war has moved away from Canada and we're not caught in anything new," Donally told the Star. "There remains so much uncertainty.

"The big cloud hanging over us is what is to be determined about auto parts. That's the biggest concern for Windsor Essex."

The Trump administration is targeting May 3 for having a system to track and tariff at 25 per cent all non-U.S. auto parts entering the states. Many of those parts, tools and moulds will have been produced locally and threaten the viability of those suppliers.

We're not aware of that yet," said Donally of whether tariffs had resulted in any business closures. "I haven't heard from our tariffs' task force of any business closure directly attributed to tariffs."

Donally added the biggest challenge for local businesses will be cash flow, especially in the automotive sector. As tools and mould projects are finishing up, he noted new orders and quotes are not back filling the pipeline.

"The uncertainty has slowed down global manufacturing, especially anything going from Windsor-Essex to the U.S.," Donally said.

"The overarching issue is what is happening to the inputs that go into products. That's the big concern locally when 22 per cent of the community is tied to manufacturing.

"That is when you're going to see the trickle-down effects of tariffs."

Outside of manufacturing, Donally said small and medium businesses are holding their own.

“Small business, car sales … things are slowing down, but we haven’t been as affected as much as I thought we would be at this point,” Donally said. “It’s a positive.

Windsor Star

Great Lakes Towing tug COLORADO escorted the FEDERAL YUKON through the Soo Locks this afternoon. 4-18-25 [David Kaye]

Newsclips 2025 April 19

From Captain Ivan Lantz   lantzivan@gmail.com   438 821 7288

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- To provide senior, command-level mariners in Canada with a representative central body;
- To encourage and maintain a high and honourable standard of ability and professional conduct among mariners;
- To develop education, training and mentoring programs for seafarers and cadets;
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