Diving Underwater Work Safety Fatality File

4 divers die after being sucked into a pipe.

Four of a team of five underwater welders in Trinidad have been presumed dead after being sucked into the oil pipeline on which they had been using scuba to carry out repairs.

The incident occurred at around 3pm on Friday (25 February) and, according to local press, relatives of the missing men have accused the oil company and emergency services of dragging their feet over the subsequent rescue operation.

The divers worked for service company LMCS, which had been contracted by Paria Fuel Trading Co Ltd to carry out the routine maintenance work. The location was Pointe-a-Pierre, a town in the west of Trinidad on the Gulf of Paria and the site of the island’s biggest oil refinery.

The scuba divers were at a depth of 18m, installing a riser on a 90cm-bore pipe that ran about 400m from shore to a berth out at sea. They had almost completed the task when a safety valve that had enabled them to work on the pipe is believed to have opened suddenly, causing a powerful vacuum effect that sucked all five of them inside.