

Ship delivers 7.5 million cubic feet of supercool cargo to LNG terminal, first shipment to arrive at facility



Giant Thermos

Giuseppe Barranco/The Enterprise

The first of what will be many LNG ships entered the Golden Pass Terminal on Thursday carrying with it 1 million barrels of the material

that will be used to start up the facility. Each future vessel will carry enough fuel to power 70,000 homes for one year.

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Thursday's shipment of about 7.5 million cubic feet of liquefied natural gas to the Golden Pass Terminal was a drop in the bucket for the new facility, which

has the capacity to store more than 27 million cubic feet — but as the first drop in the bucket, it made a big splash at the Sabine Pass plant.

The Al Khuwair tanker pulled into the terminal, steered by tugboats, at 11 a.m. as officials from

Jefferson County, Port Arthur, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Sabine Neches Pilots Association and others gathered to congratulate Golden Pass on the event, which was a long time coming.

After seven years of planning and construction, including a

year's setback due to Hurricane Ike damage, this initial "commissioning" shipment arrived.

"This is only one of many significant milestones," said Golden Pass spokesman Robert Bilnoski. "But it's a very signifi-

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LNG: Shipments should arrive every two to three days once facility is at full capacity

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cant milestone."

The terminal still is months away from being at full capacity.

This shipment will be slowly off-loaded to cool the tanks down to the necessary storage temperature.

Natural gas is converted to liquid form by cooling it to a frigid 260 degrees below zero. This condenses it down to 1/600th of its gaseous form.

Then it can be stored at atmospheric pressure in specially designed ships and storage tanks.

Facility manager Tom Burger described the ships as "like big Thermos bottles with lots of insulation."

The Al Khuwair could be docked at Golden Pass for as long as 15 days as the tanks are slowly cooled.

After that, the process will accelerate.

The next shipment should arrive in November, and the terminal is expected to be at full capacity within the first three months of 2011, Bilnoski said.

By that time, shipments



Giuseppe Barranco/The Enterprise

Golden Pass was designed to withstand 125 mph winds — equal to a Category 5 hurricane. The terminal will provide dozens of local jobs.

should be arriving every two to three days.

After the tanks are cooled and filled, the pipeline must be filled.

The Golden Pass pipeline stretches 69 miles across four Texas counties and into Beauregard Parish in Louisiana.

For transport through the pipeline, the liquid is warmed and returns to a gas state.

Officials say Golden Pass will be able to process and

distribute about 2 billion cubic feet per day, providing natural gas to about 10 million U.S. households.

The terminal is owned jointly by Qatar Petroleum, ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips and represents a \$2 billion investment.

The project employed about 1,000 workers in the construction phase and will provide as many as 90 permanent jobs.

"This is an exciting day for Jefferson County and really the entire nation," said Jefferson County Commissioner Eddie Arnold.

Arnold said he was proud that taxing entities in the region had joined forces to bring the project here, noting that several sites had been considered while feasibility studies were underway.

"This is a project we may not have had if not for tax

abatements," he said. "This is money the region might not have gotten."

Capt. Charles Tweedel, president of the Sabine Neches Pilots Association, said it was "a monumental day in the history of the waterway."

"My company dates back to 1881 and I can't imagine what our predecessors would be thinking if they could see this type of vessel, this size of vessel coming up Sabine

Pass."

The Al Khuwair, built in 2008, is 1,035 feet long and 165 feet wide and has a capacity to carry the equivalent of 1.3 million barrels of oil.

By comparison, the Eagle Otome, the ship involved in an oil spill on the Sabine Neches waterway in January, is 811 feet long, 139 feet wide and carried 570,000 barrels of oil.