

DAILY BREEZE

Injured dockworker remains hospitalized as mourning continues for lost co-worker in San Pedro



Ray Familathe, Local 13 president, speaks to members of the ILWU family gathered for the “First Blood,” 17th annual Longshore Memorial to honor fallen brothers in San Pedro on Wednesday, May 15, 2019. The event was especially somber given the news that a longshoreman was killed early Wednesday morning in an accident and another seriously injured in an explosion while they were doing maintenance. (Photo by Brittany Murray, Press-Telegram/SCNG)

By [DONNA LITTLEJOHN](#) | dlittlejohn@scng.com | Daily Breeze

PUBLISHED: May 16, 2019 at 5:21 pm | **UPDATED:** May 16, 2019 at 5:32 pm

A seriously injured dock worker underwent more surgery on Thursday, May 16, as his family kept a hospital vigil and the mourning continued for his co-worker who died [in the work-related accident the day before](#).

“It was a tough day, and it’s not going to be easy going forward,” said Los Angeles port Commissioner Anthony Pirozzi at Thursday’s regular meeting.

The mood among workers was somber as Fenix Marine Services re-opened its terminal late Thursday for the first time since the incident, said Ray Familathe, president of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 13.

“It’s really tough,” Familathe said.

An autopsy was pending for Jose Santoya, 58, who was killed at the scene when a top handler tire he and his co-worker, Pedro Chavarin, were changing exploded. Top loaders reposition shipping containers on docks as they are unloaded.

“Many of the workers were meeting with their foremen about the day ahead when they heard a loud noise like an explosion,” Familathe said of the accident that occurred after 7 a.m. Wednesday.

Chavarin was rushed to county Harbor-UCLA Hospital where he underwent emergency surgery. His injuries were described as multiple and severe.

At least one other surgery took place Thursday with possibly more to follow, Familathe said.

An investigation into the cause of the accident has been launched by Cal/OSHA, the Los Angeles Port Police and the U.S. Coast Guard. That inquiry is expected to take several weeks or longer.

A statement released by the terminal management on Wednesday said officials were “deeply saddened” by what happened, adding: “The safety and well-being of our employees is always our primary concern and an investigation is underway with local agencies to ensure a cause is identified and to prevent such incidents.”

Familathe said safety protocols will be reviewed once the investigation is concluded.

The two men in Wednesday’s accident, he said, were both local residents and were carrying out maintenance and repair duties at the terminal.

Santoya was the father of two grown daughters and planned to retire next year when he turned 59 1/2.

Only a few hours after the incident, [members of the ILWU gathered along Harbor Boulevard in San Pedro for the annual memorial that honors those who have died on the docks.](#)

Although not common, death and injury are always risks union members keep in mind, Familathe said.

It’s why, he added, many of them take the time to kiss their spouses and children goodbye before heading out for a shift.

“Working on the waterfront, everyone knows the danger,” he said.