Marsa road spillage 'may damage cars'

Ivan Martin

The corrosive spill in Marsa earlier this week could damage car paint and undercarriages, according to RMF director Patrick Rausi.

The spill, which covered a major part of Aldo Moro Road on Monday, came from a nearby factory and is believed to have been an acid used in galvanisation.

It caused a three-hour traffic jam and a number of bumper-to-bumper collisions along the busy arterial road.

"The damage is not irreparable but we are advising owners to wash their cars immediately"

Civil Protection Department workers washed away the liquid that spilled on to Aldo Moro Road on Monday, closing the busy route. ***Photo: Paul Spiteri Lucas***

"One of our vehicles drove through the acidic liquid and its body spray went matte. In some parts, the protection on the undercarriage started to come off and parts were rusting.

"The damage is not irreparable but we are advising owners to wash their cars immediately and to apply undercoat protection to the bottom of their vehicles," Mr Rausi said.

The slippery liquid was washed away by the Civil Protection Department.

CPD head John Rizzo told *Times of Malta* that the liquid was not a health hazard but declined to comment further until analysis was completed.

The police are also investigating but declined to comment when asked whether they would be pressing charges.

Mr Rausi said his company was advising members to inform their insurers if they had driven through the spillage.

"If you drove through this liquid we recommend taking immediate action. Insurance providers should accept claims," he said, adding that any claims must be supported by a report filed at the Paola police station.

Transport Minister Joe Mizzi also said that insurance providers should accept claims.

Digging into Malta's prehistoric past

Ġgantija temples in Gozo. *Photo: viewingmalta.com*

Academics at Queen's University, Belfast, have received a €2.5 million grant to examine prehistoric sites in Malta.

The project will span the islands' history from the first occupation of Neolithic farmers at around 5,500BC until medieval times.

It will also be looking at how to ensure the long-term conservation of such sites.

New forensic technology will be used as part of the study, funded by the European Research Council.

The five-year research project will be led by Caroline Malone, from Queen's School of Geography, who is hoping to uncover a wealth of new information.

It may shed light on how people managed to live in an unstable environment and what life was like there.

"This society created megalithic temples when most of Europe was far less sophisticated. Yet, this civilisation disappeared quite unexpectedly around 2,400BC.

"We hope to look at the unstable conditions, fluctuating rainfall, deforestation, to find out more about what happened and why even this remarkable island community had to change its cultural and economic world," Dr Malone said.

The project is themed 'Fragility and sustainability in restricted island environments: adaptation, culture change and collapse in prehistory'.

Previous studies conducted by Patrick Schembri (University of Malta) and Chris Hunt (Queen's University) have already demonstrated that the climate and environment were unstable during the last few millennia before Christ and that instability would have impacted on the lives of prehistoric societies.

New work has commenced with a series of pollen cores extracted from across Malta that will build a detailed understanding of the changing flora/vegetation of the islands.

Excavation has already extracted tiny invertebrates such as snails and insects and this will allow researchers to reconstruct the changing ecology during different periods.

The staff at Queen's University will use their specialist lab in Belfast to provide expertise in dating both environmental and archaeological materials.

This will allow for an accurate chronology of early Malta from Bayesian statistical studies that will link the natural and human worlds together.

Examination of the early economy may identify changes in farming systems while analysis of human bones will reveal diet, disease and population structure of the ancient Maltese.

Air Malta bird strike

An Air Malta flight landed safely in Athens after reporting a bird strike while approaching its destination, the airline said yesterday.

The plane operating KM780/1 was inspected by engineers in the Greek capital and Air Malta decided to operate a relief flight for the convenience of passengers.

On board the outgoing flight were engineers and flight crew to handle the plane involved in the bird strike as well as aircraft parts. The incident affected a number of flights, Air Malta said.

A spokesman said the airline gave the utmost importance to the safety and well-being of clients and crew and apologised for any inconvenience caused by circumstances beyond its control.

AD: gas ship outside bay

Alternattiva Demokratika deputy chairman Carmel Cacopardo said it was "essential" and "necessary" that the gas used for the Delimara power station was stored outside Marsaxlokk bay.

Welcoming the use of gas, which, he noted, would improve the air quality in Marsaxlokk, Birżebbuġa and the surrounding localities, Mr Cacopardo said it was clear that the residents' concerns were not being adequately addressed.

The risk assessment on the gas storage facility at Marsaxlokk bay "is far from convincing", he added. It was important that there was no undue haste and that further studies were carried out.

December tourists up

Tourists visiting Malta in December rose by almost three per cent compared with the same month last year, official statistics show.

Arrivals in December were estimated at 65,345, of which almost 53,000 were on holiday while almost 8,300 were in Malta for business, the National Statistics Office said.

Total nights increased by 6.8 per cent, reaching 567,553, while the average length of stay was 8.7 nights.

Neutering campaign

The government has launched a free neutering campaign for dogs and cats, widening it to include animals kept inside homes and domestic pets.

Animal Rights Parliamentary Secretary Roderick Galdes called on voluntary groups to take advantage of the EU-funded campaign, which runs from February 5-19. Call 2740 0300 for more information.