



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

December 2009

Welcome to our New
Associate
Members

Anne Radecki
NSW

William Ray
Victoria

Three Injured in Canberra Explosion

(Tuesday 15th December 2009)

THREE people have been seriously injured following an explosion in northern Canberra. The explosion is believed to have been caused by compacted aerosol cans.



The ACT Fire Brigade and Ambulance Service received reports of an explosion at healthcare company Stericorp's offices in Sandford Street, Mitchell, just before 1pm (AEDT). A spokesman for the ACT Emergency Services Agency said crews arrived to find three men suffering severe burns.

"They were stabilised on scene by intensive care paramedics, then transported to the Canberra Hospital in

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Conference
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a serious condition," he said.

About 1000 people were evacuated from two buildings at the site. District Officer Martin Lloyd said the explosion was believed to have occurred after aerosol cans were placed into a compactor. "There was no toxic substances released as a result of the incident," he said.

"Three injured males are believed to have been the only people within the area at the time."

Source: Daily Telegraph and AAP

Woman Dies After Chemical Exposure

A 69-year-old woman has died and her husband and son hospitalised after being exposed to a chemical in Sydney's outer southwest.

The Ambulance Service of NSW says the woman was in cardiac arrest when paramedics arrived at the Byron Road farm in Leppington after receiving a call at 2.50am (AEDT) on Tuesday.

Her son, 38, was performing CPR when the ambulance arrived but the woman could not be revived and died at the scene. The son, husband, 76, and four paramedics were taken to Liverpool Hospital after inhaling the unknown chemical. They suffered nausea and headaches, an ambulance service spokesman said.

"We are trying to find out what the substance is that they were exposed to," he said. The paramedics are expected to be discharged from hospital within a day.

Source: Sydney Morning Herald

The International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code (IMDG) - Does it Work?

Andrew Cooper's LA Buenos Aires' *Dangerous Goods* Slide Show Presentation ...

http://www.lloyds.com/NR/rdonlyres/ABED7D9E-F26D-41BA-9BF5-FE86567DD303/0/Agency_ACIMDGPaper.pdf

Visit Your Website

<http://www.aidgc.com> and check out the Members' Only pages.

Corporate Members

Our Corporate Members provide a range of products and services to the Dangerous Goods Industry. Their contact details are:

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Tighter Controls on Chemical Producers to Improve Safety in China

The country's 24,000 licensed chemical producers will be required to list and classify all their products to the State Administration for Work Safety (SAWS) by the end of next year, as part of efforts to improve industry safety, authorities said yesterday.

Li Yuncai, an official of the National Registration Center for Chemicals under the SAWS, said: "About 17,000 producers

of hazardous chemicals including explosive materials, flammable liquid and solid, toxic articles, have already been registered with the authority."

The biggest beneficiary will be the carriers or customers of the hazardous chemicals, Li said. "The producers will be required to submit standard instruction labels, which help people know the products' dangers, and offer technical support in the event of accidents," Li said.

"Meanwhile, we have a 24-hour emergency hotline which provides professional help according to registered information in case of accidents," Li said.

Every year, accidents happen due to inappropriate conveyance and lack of support in emergency handling, Li said. "In 2005, for example, a ro-ro passenger ship carrying hygroscopic and flammable goods sailing from Penglai, Shandong province to Dalian, Liaoning province, caught fire, but because the goods were not labeled and were without instructions, sailors used water to try and put out the fire.

It only aggravated and caused a more serious outcome," Li said.

The state required registration as early as 2002, but it has not been compulsory until now. "The amendment of the Safety Regulations for Dangerous Chemical Goods will enforce the producers to register their good and provide related documents, otherwise they will be prohibited from production or fined," Li said.

The new amendment will come into effect either next month or early next year.

Ji Guofeng, another official at the registration center, said

This is our last
Newsletter for 2009
and the next issue will
be in February 2010.

If you would like to
make a contribution,
have an interesting
story, case study or
report, please send to:
robhogan@tpg.com.au

This month my thanks
go to
Don Johnston
and
Frank Mendham
for their contributions

the process would take a month with a major part of it
able to be done online.

"The producers could e-mail the specific introduction,
instruction and label of their goods to us online, and we
would point out the inaccurate or disqualified parts, then
after they correct those parts, we would give them
certificates," Ji said.

Chang Zhanhua, a senior official of Qilu Petrochemical
Company, said it is "absolutely necessary" to register their
products to the authority, although it took him and his
colleagues three months and several revisions to
complete it.

Source: Xie Yu (China Daily)

Chemical Fire Leaked Chlorine into Atmosphere

Dangerous goods storage company West Point USA has
been convicted and fined \$160,000 after a chemical fire in
December 2007.

West Point pleaded guilty to polluting the atmosphere. The
fire was started after stormwater entered a storage shed
used to store chlorine, and reacted with the chemical.
The resulting fire spilled large amounts of chlorine gas
into the atmosphere, disrupting a wide area.

Local residents were affected by the gas, and some
needed medical attention. The chlorine gas also impacted
on local wildlife and domestic pets.

According to the Environment Protection Agency, the
event caused profound damage to the environment, and
the fine is a warning for companies to store dangerous
chemicals properly.

Source: Materials Handling

Keep in Touch

If you have any suggestions or queries, please do not hesitate
to contact the AIDGC Executive Officer, Robyn Hogan at:
robhogan@tpg.com.au or via the AIDGC Paging Service on
02) 9430 6739 and I will return your call.



Frank Mendham from Aecom Pty. Ltd. and AIDGC Member conducted three Seminars in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne on Mixed Class Warehousing for Members and their Guests. Thank you for your commitment Frank! You are very much appreciated.



Varanus Damage

Tap Oil Has Settled with Insurers

Oil and gas producer Tap Oil Ltd has reached a final settlement with its insurers over the Varanus Island gas explosion last year.

Tap has a 12.2 per cent stake in one of three joint ventures on the Apache Energy Ltd-operated island, offshore

Karratha in Western Australia, where gas is processed and piped to the mainland.

About a third of state's domestic gas supply was slashed when a pipeline linking the island to the mainland exploded in June 2008. "The total net settlement of \$US21.07 million (\$A23.5 million) represents compensation for the impact of the incident on oil and gas production and sales as well as the cost to repair the damage to the Varanus Island facilities," Tap said in a statement on Friday.

"Proceeds from this claim will be recognised as revenue by Tap in its financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2009."

A report into the explosion by the National Offshore Petroleum Safety Authority said Apache had failed to inspect and monitor its pipelines, of which sections had ineffective anti-corrosion protection.

The WA government is pursuing criminal prosecution of Apache in relation to the incident.

Source: AAP NewsWire

Acid Spill On Kansas Interstate

Video:

<http://ozarksfirst.com/content/fulltext/?cid=210842>

Massive Methane Gas Explosion in Turkey

Video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMG1m6joAyA>



Fiery Bottle Closes Highway at Hexham

An unstable gas bottle caused traffic chaos for thousands of motorists yesterday when emergency crews were forced to close the Pacific Highway near Hexham Bridge for more than three hours.

Fears of an explosion prompted the introduction a 200-metre exclusion zone surrounding a smash repair business just east of Hexham Bridge, after the bottle, carrying oxyacetylene for welding, caught fire after midday.

Fire crews used water to cool the tank down but it was not until after 3.30pm that the highway was reopened to traffic.

A 50-metre exclusion zone remained last night as crews worked to make the area safe.

Source: theHerald.com.au

Cars Carrying Propane & Plastic Burnt in Train Derailment

Seven propane cars and one containing plastic pellets burnt sending thick smoke billowing over a small hamlet near the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border following the

derailment of a CN freight train. A spokesman for CN rail said authorities set up a containment area around the burning wreck and no one was allowed to go near the scene until it was safe to do so.

At least 17 cars were believed to be off the tracks. The locomotives did not derail and the crew of two is safe. Safety is our priority so we can't go there yet, said spokesman Kevin Franchuk in a phone interview with Vancouverite from Spy Hill. We know there are a number of cars that are involved – there were eight cars on fire. There were a total of 168 cars and a perimeter has been set up around the site. The venting worked properly, there were cars with propane that on fire as well as one carrying plastic pellets. There was no danger to the public, the fire department had evacuated several homes that were impacted by the smoke. Franchuk said there were no injuries to crew during the derailment because the locomotives stayed on the tracks.

A cause is of the derailment was not clear.

Source: Vancouverite

BUNCEFIELD

Process Safety Leadership Group Final Report: Safety and Environmental Standards for Fuel Storage Sites

The PSLG Final report is an important step forward to improving process safety standards and leadership across our sector. I would like to thank you for all your hard work, endurance and commitment in helping to draft this report. We all agree that this was a significantly worthwhile endeavour in order to prevent another serious incident like Buncefield but it has been your efforts that have made it happen.

We also all recognise that the guidance in this report is only the starting point and that we must apply equal if not more effort to its implementation . Please use every

opportunity to promote the guidance within your organisation and with your contacts who have an interest in process safety.

Tony Traynor, PSLG Chair

Buncefield Response Programme Team

The report is available from :

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/comah/buncefield/response.htm>

Dangerous Goods Incidents – Case Studies

Source CASA

The following are factual scenarios relating to some of the dangerous goods incidents involving passengers which have come to the attention of CASA over the past couple of years. The persons involved in a number of the incidents which occurred in Australia were prosecuted and received heavy monetary fines.

- 1. A passenger arriving on an international flight was detected by Customs officials during routine screening of checked baggage carrying 5ml of mercury. Mercury is a Class 8 dangerous goods and is highly corrosive to aluminium. Not the sort of substance which should be carried in passenger's baggage. Fortunately, none had escaped. The passenger was counselled.**
- 2. A shipper from the Middle East sent some dental supplies to a colleague in Sydney. He used the postal system and the consignment was transported by air both internationally and domestically. The dental supplies included a glass container of about 100 mls of mercury. The glass container broke during transport and leaked into the hold of the aircraft. Fortunately it was discovered and cleaned up - very costly. Had it not been discovered, significant weaknesses in the skin of the aircraft could have occurred. A side benefit to this incident was the discovery that the consignee in Australia was practising dentistry illegally.**
- 3. A passenger arriving on an international flight was**

- picked up by Customs, on a routine check, carrying a quantity of flammable solids and corrosive material in checked baggage. The passenger was counselled.
4. On arriving at their destination, one passenger's bag had smoke coming out of it. A check by the airline revealed that a cigarette lighter had ignited and burned some of the clothing.
 5. While unloading baggage, porters noticed smoke rising from a suitcase. Investigation revealed that a quantity of book matches had caught alight. (In recent years there have been several incidents similar to this.) Book matches have a habit of igniting when subject to vibrations experienced by suitcases stacked in an aircraft cargo compartment. It has even happened while the matches have been in pockets and brief cases. Should such an incident occur when the same passenger has also packed a leaking tin of paint thinners or similar then it might become more interesting.
 6. A courier driver arrived at a freight forwarder's premises and asked to pick up a large crate which contained black powder (an explosive). The crate had travelled from the east by air and was not consigned or carried by the airline as dangerous goods. The freight forwarder became suspicious and notified CASA. Investigation revealed that the owner of the crate had deliberately consigned it as non-dangerous then travelled the same route on a different aircraft. The person was arrested by Federal Police and prosecuted. The person served six months of a two year sentence. The sentencing judge said that it was clear that the person knew he was committing a crime and knowingly and recklessly placed the lives of passengers in great danger. Reinforcing this was the fact that the same person was picked up in a different airport a few days earlier with a brief case full of fireworks after travelling on an aircraft.
 7. Federal Police were called to a baggage carousel at an International Airport regarding an unclaimed bag.

An inspection of the contents revealed a fire extinguisher (dangerous goods), a blue pullover and a packet of sandwiches. A report was submitted to CASA who traced the baggage ticket to a resident, just arrived from overseas, who denied any knowledge of the bag. Enquiries were made back through the airport where the bag was first checked in. The baggage was traced to a taxi driver who regularly drops passengers at the airport. It was finally discovered that the passenger had inadvertently taken the taxi driver's bag from the boot and had not noticed that he checked in an additional bag. This shows how easily things can happen. Also it is assumed that the taxi driver was wondering what happened to his lunch.

8. A passenger returned from holidays overseas with several flares and explosive primers in the checked baggage. The person was also carrying some plant material which the Quarantine officers picked up. They noticed that the person was nervous and directed the person to the customs line for a full check. During that check the explosives were detected. The person was prosecuted and fined a considerable sum of money.

9. A passenger arrived in a capital city after travelling on a small regional aircraft and was transferring to a larger aircraft when a Police drug detection dog showed a considerable interest in the passenger's baggage. The passenger was asked what was in his bag which excited the dog and the passenger admitted to carrying fireworks. The matter was referred to CASA who



investigated and recommended to the DPP that the passenger be prosecuted for an offence against the Civil Aviation Act. The passenger was fined \$5,000.

10. A shipper consigned a wet cell battery

undeclared as dangerous goods. Before consignment he emptied the acid out of the battery but failed to protect the terminals. He also, apparently in the same package, placed a brake cable. On arrival of the aircraft, the package was smouldering from the heat generated from the brake cable short circuiting the terminals. On unloading the package burst into flames. It is suspected that the reason the package was only smouldering in the aircraft hold was due to the lack of oxygen caused by a significant quantity of dry ice in that hold. Your luck is really in when one item of dangerous goods prevents a serious problem with another.

International Incidents

- 11. In a cargo hangar, a container, which had been stuffed in a container loading area some miles away was sitting on the loading dock prior to being loaded onto a passenger aircraft. The cargo burst into flames. Airport emergency services were called to control a fierce blaze. One item of cargo in the container was, it was later learned, an oxygen generator - undeclared as dangerous goods. These devices produce oxygen by chemical reaction which creates significant heat. The fire services had several attempts at extinguishing the fire but it kept on erupting and burned almost the entire contents of the container. It was fortunate that it did not erupt four or five hours later over the Pacific Ocean, as in spite of the fire fighting facilities in the aircraft cargo hold, this fire would have fed upon the oxygen it was creating.**

It is easy to draw some parallels here with an aircraft that crashed into the Indian Ocean some years ago as a result of what is strongly suspected to be undeclared bottles of nitric acid. They broke and caused a severe fire by igniting other organic material in the vicinity. Another recent accident which also involved these oxygen generators highlights the need for declaration and proper packaging of all dangerous goods.

- 12. Undeclared dangerous goods described as "laundry products" loaded about two hours earlier almost caused the loss of a passenger aircraft. By the time the aircraft landed, the floor had started to sag from the heat generated by a fire caused by a mixture of a hydrogen peroxide solution, an oxidiser, and about 12 kg of a sodium based orthosilicate-based mixture (a corrosive solid.) Because the consignment was not declared as DG, no labels or orientation markings were on the package. It was loaded on its side in the cargo compartment and the liquid leaked onto the solid causing a very hot fire. It was estimated by aircraft accident investigators that this aircraft could have broken in two within another 10-15 minutes.**
- 13. An aircraft crashed due, it is thought, to a flammable liquid, probably contained in passengers stowed baggage, leaking. An ignition source ignited the liquid causing the explosion which caused the aircraft to crash with the death of all on board.**

While the more critical of these incidents occurred overseas and mostly in high volume cargo consignments, it indicates that significant incidents, bordering on accidents, can happen. We would like to prevent such a thing occurring in Australia or on any Australian aircraft.

Reported Incidents

Following are examples of some of the incidents which have been reported by the major domestic operators recently in Australia. All involved undeclared dangerous goods in cargo consignments:

- leaking/spillage of acid from wet cell batteries - three incidents**
- spillage from fuel tanks on motor mowers, chain saws and other internal combustion engines - at least four incidents.**
- explosives (1.4S) - 2 incidents**
- aerosol pressure packs - at least four incidents**
- flammable paint/thinners - at least four incidents**

Investigation

It is interesting that in a number of these incidents, investigation has revealed that not only was the shipper at fault for not declaring the dangerous goods, there was a sufficient number of tell-tale signs that should have alerted the cargo acceptance staff that there may be something wrong. For example, in one case the shipper described the consignment as "paint" on the consignment note - yet it

got through. It is difficult to understand how a chain saw or a motor mower with fuel in the tank can be accepted without question. (Perhaps the dangerous goods training had been inadequate.)

It is also interesting that there has been only one or two reports of incidents occurring outside of the big aircraft operators. It is suspected that incidents do occur in the general aviation area but that perhaps they are not recognised as a problem or the procedures are not in place for reporting.

Throughout the world, in addition to those accidents where the cause has been established beyond doubt, there have been aircraft crashes, resulting in the deaths of all on board, where the cause has never been determined. It is possible that dangerous goods were involved in some of these crashes.

It should also be noted that, from all of the hundreds of incidents reported involving both domestic and international cargo, less than one percent involved dangerous goods which had been properly declared, packaged, labelled and documented.

- **This presentation is based on content presented at the Mines Safety Roadshow held in October 2009**

From the Archives –

Mt. Blanc Tunnel The 1999 Fire –

Is Margarine a Dangerous Good?

On 24 March 1999, 39 people died when a Belgian transport truck carrying flour and margarine caught fire in

the tunnel. After several km, the driver realized something was wrong as cars coming in the opposite direction flashed their headlights at him; a glance in his mirrors showed white smoke coming out from under his cab. This was not yet a fire emergency; there had been 16 other truck fires in the tunnel over the previous 35 years, always extinguished on the spot by the drivers.

At 10:53 CET, the driver of the vehicle, 57-year-old Gilbert Degrave, stopped in the middle of the tunnel to attempt to fight the fire but he was suddenly forced back by flames erupting from his cab.

At 10:55, the tunnel employees triggered the fire alarm and stopped any further traffic from entering. At this point the tunnel was populated by at least 10 cars/vans and 18 trucks that had entered from the French side. A few vehicles from the Italian side passed the Volvo truck without stopping. Some of the cars from the French side managed to turn around in the narrow 2-lane tunnel to retreat back to France, but negotiating the road in the dense smoke that had rapidly filled the tunnel quickly made this impossible. The larger trucks didn't have the space to turn around, and reversing out wasn't an option. Most drivers rolled up their windows and waited for rescue. The ventilation system in the tunnel drove toxic smoke back down the tunnel faster than anyone could run to safety. These fumes quickly filled the tunnel and caused vehicle engines to stall; they needed oxygen to run. Many drivers near the blaze who attempted to leave their cars and seek refuge points were quickly overcome. Within minutes, two fire trucks from Chamonix responded to the unfolding disaster. The fire had melted the wiring and plunged the tunnel into darkness; in the smoke and with abandoned and wrecked vehicles blocking their path, the large fire engines were unable to proceed. The fire crews instead abandoned their vehicles and took refuge in two of the emergency fire cubicles (fire-door sealed small rooms set into the walls every 600 metres).

As they huddled behind the fire doors, they could hear

burning fuel roll down the road surface, causing tires to pop and fuel tanks to explode. They were rescued five hours later by a third fire crew that responded and reached them via a ventilation duct; of the 15 firefighters that had been trapped, 14 were in serious condition and one (their commanding officer) died in the hospital. Some victims escaped to the fire cubicles. The original fire doors on the cubicles were rated to survive for two hours. Some had been upgraded in the 34 years since the tunnel was built to survive for four hours. However, the fire burned for 56 hours and reached temperatures of 1,000 °C (1,832°F) mainly because of the margarine load in the trailer, equivalent to a 23 000 L oil tanker, which spread to other cargo vehicles nearby that also carried combustible loads. Slowly, everything became part of the inferno. It trapped around 40 vehicles in dense and poisonous smoke (containing carbon monoxide and cyanide).

Due to the gradient of the road, the tunnel acted like a chimney sucking cold air in on one side with the intense heat and smoke leaving on the other. Authorities compounded the effect by pumping in further fresh air from the Italian side, forcing poisonous black smoke through the length of the tunnel. Only cars on the upper side of the tunnel were trapped, while cars on the other side of the fire were mostly unaffected. 27 people died in their vehicles. 10 died trying to escape on foot. Of the initial 50 people trapped by the fire, 12 survived. It would be over five days before the tunnel cooled sufficiently for anyone to go back in, to start repairs.

Pierluccio Tinazzi

The 12 survivors all said the same thing: "That guy on the motorcycle saved my life". It was Pierluccio Tinazzi, a security guard employed by the Italian side who perished helping victims of the fire. His job was to ride up and down the tunnel to see that everything was running smoothly. He was on the French side at the time emergency services had given up. He donned breathing equipment and rode into the tunnel on his BMW K75. He was in radio contact

with the Italian side for over an hour before succumbing to the intense heat and perishing. His BMW melted into the pavement after he dragged an unconscious truck driver behind a fire door. A commemorative plaque at the Italian entrance honors his heroism.

Aftermath

The tunnel underwent major changes in the three years it remained closed after the fire. Renovations include computerised detection equipment, extra security bays, a parallel escape shaft and a fire station in the middle of the tunnel complete with double cabbed fire trucks. The safety shafts also have clean oxygen flowing through them via air vents. Any people in the security bays now have video contact with the control centre, so they can communicate with the people trapped inside and inform them about what is happening in the tunnel more clearly. A remote site for cargo safety inspection was created on each side: Aosta (I) and Passy-Le Fayet (F). Here all trucks are inspected well before the tunnel entrance. The same areas are also used as staging areas, to smooth the peaks of commercial traffic.

The new tunnel exit, France.

This was the tunnel entrance through which the truck that started the fire entered. The experience gained from the investigation into the fire was one of the principal factors that led to the creation of the Bureau d'Enquetes sur les Accidents de Transport Terrestre.



Manslaughter Trial

In Grenoble, France, 16 people and companies were tried on 31 January 2005 for manslaughter. Defendants in the trial included:

- **Gilbert Degrave, the Belgian driver of the truck that caused the fire**
- **Volvo, the truck's manufacturer**
- **French and Italian managers of the tunnel**
- **ATMB and SITMB**
- **Safety regulators**
- **Mayor of Chamonix**
- **A senior official of the French Ministry of Public Works.**

The cause of the fire is disputed. Different accounts report it to be a cigarette stub carelessly thrown at the truck, and it supposedly entered the engine induction snorkel above the cab, setting the paper air filter on fire, a mechanical or electrical fault, or poor maintenance of the truck's engine. The closest smoke detector was out of order and French emergency services do not use the same radio frequency as those inside the tunnel. The Italian company responsible for operating the tunnel, SITMB, paid €13.5 million (\$17.5 million US) to a fund for the families of the victims.

Édouard Balladur, former president of the French company operating the tunnel (from 1968 to 1980), then later Prime Minister of France, was heard as a witness. He was asked about the security measures that he took or failed to take. Balladur claimed that a lot was prevented by the division of the tunnel into two sections operated by two companies (one in France, the other in Italy) which did not take a concerted approach. On 27 July 2005, thirteen defendants were found guilty, and handed sentences ranging from fines to suspended prison sentences, to 6 months in jail.

- **Gerard Roncoli, the head of security at the tunnel, was given a 6 month jail term plus an additional 24 months suspended sentence, the heaviest sentence levied against any of the defendants.**
- **Remy Chardon, former president of the French company operating the tunnel, was given a two-year suspended jail term and a fine of approximately \$18,000 US.**
- **Gilbert Degrave, the driver of the truck, was given a**

four-month suspended sentence.

- **Seven other people, including the tunnel's Italian security chief, were handed suspended terms and fines. Three companies were fined up to \$180,000 US each.**

The charges against Volvo were dropped

Source: WIKIPEDIA

Your views on tunnel safety?

Standards Australia Draft for Public Comment DR AS 4825

Tunnel fire safety has a closing date 12 Feb 2010. Should C1 combustible liquids be banned from tunnels?

Download the free draft and make your views known

Chemical Blast Shakes Texas Plant

Wednesday morning's explosion at American Acryl's Port Road plant sounded like a jet's sonic boom as it hurled a fireball into the sky, rattled windows and cracked walls as far away as Clear Lake and sequestered residents in their homes for hours.

But despite the drama and the open question of the economic impact of the \$150 million facility's indefinite closure for repair, the human toll appeared small. Two of the 10 to 15 workers on duty at the time of the accident were hospitalized for observation but later released in good condition.

American Acryl spokeswoman Kelli Gregory said the explosion resulted in no off-site toxic impact. We are just thankful that everyone is safe, said plant general manager Joe Goins, who said he didn't know the cause of the explosion and fire.

OSHA on the Scene Investigators from the U.S.

Occupational Health and Safety Administration were dispatched to the scene Wednesday morning. Goins said the plant, which opened in 2002 and occupies 60 acres in the industrial sprawl of the Port of Houston's Bayport Terminal, manufactures acrylic acid, which is used in products ranging from latex house paint to disposable diapers.

The explosion happened at a facility that handles toluene, a petroleum-derived chemical used in making acrylic acid. Low-dose exposure to toluene can affect the nervous system, causing tiredness, confusion, weakness and memory loss. High doses can cause kidney damage and death. The chemical, says the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, usually does not linger in the environment long.

Roads to the site were closed as firefighters from nearby communities responded to the emergency.

Plant Cited 20 Times

Construction of the plant, which produces up to 120,000 tons of acrylic acid annually, generated controversy among nearby residents, who protested that the area already was overburdened with health-threatening air pollution. At the time, state regulators said the plant's permits require state-of-the-art emissions controls, making it among the most tightly controlled of about 50 industrial installations in the Bayport area.

Since 2004, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality has cited American Acryl 20 times for mostly minor permit violations, ranging from missing paperwork to the inadequate monitoring of valves.

Source: Houston and Texas News

Watch the Video

<http://www.khou.com/news/Huge-explosion-rocks-plant-in-Seabrook-78865017.html>

Watch the Video

<http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/hotstories/6760993.html>

The AIDGC Board wishes all its Members the happiness of Christmas and much joy in the coming year.