

Toxco Moves To Prevent Battery Explosion Repeat

TRAIL, B.C. (CP) — A Trail, B.C. battery recycling plant is calling in some outside help to avoid a repeat of a spectacular explosion and fire in November.

U.S.-based Toxco, Inc. has retained consultants to provide advice on better building design, evaluate the process of battery receiving, storage and treatment, and prepare a risk management plan.

Plant manager Kathy Bruce is also doing industry research on other plants' safety processes, while the industry as a whole reviews the standard rule that water cannot be used to fight lithium battery fires.

Her work is cut out for her, but Bruce calls that yet to be done "all good, all really, really good."

She hopes to have results from the various reports by summer.

A fire-code engineering firm hired by the plant is currently busy owing to the upcoming Vancouver Olympics, delaying some of the work. Bruce said the destroyed building won't be replaced until she receives advice from all areas. No budget for upgrades has been determined.

"We don't want this to drag out for months and months," she said.

The outbuilding that exploded was used to store lithium batteries, prior to being processed. But unlike other, bunker-like concrete storage buildings scattered around the outskirts of the plant's property, the small building that went up in flames on Nov. 7 was metal-framed, with six-inch, concrete-lined walls on a concrete base.

The structure did not withstand the blast, and the resulting chemical fire burned through the night before firefighters were able to contain it. That's because they first had to let all the lithium burn off, a standard fire practice stemming from an act that says water and lithium together create explosions.

"Right now, the fire code specifies that you can't put water on lithium batteries," said Bruce. "Within the industry, there is some work ongoing to change that, (maybe) you can fight these fires with water."

She said it's an issue Toxco is committed to review.

Fire officials have said that the blaze was likely the result of an internal short in one

Toxco Moves To Prevent Battery Explosion Repeat

Published on Industrial Maintenance & Plant Operation (<http://www.impomag.com>)

of the stored batteries, though that finding is not conclusive because the damage was extensive.

Source URL (retrieved on 01/28/2015 - 5:26pm):

<http://www.impomag.com/news/2010/01/toxco-moves-prevent-battery-explosion-repeat>