OSHA Cites Mississippi Phosphates

The Associated Press

PASCAGOULA, Miss. (AP) — Mississippi Phosphates Corp. has been cited by the government for 40 safety and health violations following the deaths of two workers in separate incidents at the company's Pascagoula facilities.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration says in a news release Monday that it has proposed penalties of $165,900. The company has 15 days to appeal.

"The company is undertaking a comprehensive review of OSHA's report and will expeditiously address OSHA's recommendations for improving the safety of our workplace. MPC remains committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for its employees," Richard Johnson, vice president of operations at MPC, said in a statement.

Johnson said the company cooperated with the OSHA investigation. He said following the accidents, MPC voluntarily shut down its facility for more than two weeks to examine its safety and training procedures.

While the OSHA inspectors were on site, Johnson said recommendations were made and MPC diligently addressed them in a timely manner. He said MPC has completed the vast majority of the items noted during the inspection and has a plan to complete them all.

On May 22, a worker died while attempting to start up a steam turbine in sulfuric acid plant and being hit by flying metal debris when the turbine housing ruptured due to apparent over pressurization. In a similar incident on June 1, a worker restarting a tripped steam turbine in sulfuric acid plant also was killed by flying metal debris when the turbine housing ruptured due to over pressurization.

OSHA cited other safety and health violations including exposing workers to "struck-by" hazards by not protecting them against over pressurization and failing to maintain and service equipment in accordance with the company's maintenance program to prevent over pressurization. The company also was cited for failing to test and inspect pressure relief devices throughout the facility.

Mississippi Phosphates is a producer and marketer of diammonium phosphate, which is used as a fertilizer. The company's manufacturing facilities consist of two sulfuric acid plants, a phosphoric acid plant and diammonium phosphate granulation plant.

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