



U. S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board RECOMMENDATION STATUS CHANGE SUMMARY

Report:	Imperial Sugar Company Dust Explosion and Fire
Recommendation Number:	2008-05-I-GA-R11
Date Issued:	September 24, 2009
Recipient:	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
New Status:	Closed – Reconsidered/Superseded <i>(Superseded by 2017-04-I-WI-R10)</i>
Date of Status Change:	November 30, 2023

Recommendation Text:

Proceed expeditiously, consistent with the Chemical Safety Board's November 2006 recommendation and OSHA's announced intention to conduct rulemaking, to promulgate a comprehensive standard to reduce or eliminate hazards from fire and explosion from combustible powders and dust.

Board Status Change Decision:

A. Rationale for Recommendation

On February 7, 2008, a series of sugar dust explosions occurred at the Imperial Sugar manufacturing facility in Port Wentworth, GA. The first dust explosion occurred in the conveyor belt located beneath the sugar silos. The facility had recently enclosed the conveyor belt for operational reasons which allowed the dust to accumulate within the enclosed space creating an explosive atmosphere. An unknown ignition source ignited the sugar dust, causing an explosion which propagated throughout the facility and resulted in multiple secondary dust explosions.

The incident resulted in 14 worker fatalities. Eight of the workers died at the scene, six others succumbed to their injuries later while hospitalized. 36 other workers suffered serious burns and other injuries, some of which were permanently debilitating. The explosions and subsequent fires also destroyed the majority of the facility.

The U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board (CSB) investigated the incident and found several safety issues including conveying equipment not designed or maintained to minimize fugitive sugar dust emissions, inadequate housekeeping practices, and a lack of regulatory coverage for combustible dusts. As a result of these findings, the CSB issued one recommendation to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). This status change summary addresses CSB Recommendation Nos. 2008-05-I-GA-R11.

B. Response to the Recommendation

Following the issuance of the recommendation, OSHA undertook many noteworthy and important regulatory enforcement and educational efforts to prevent and control combustible dust hazards in the workplace, but never issued a standard as required by the recommendations.

During the summer of 2017 OSHA abandoned its combustible dust rulemaking effort citing resource constraints and other priorities. There is no rulemaking on combustible dust on OSHA's current regulatory agenda or its list of long-term actions. There is no indication that they are working on a combustible dust standard as required by the recommendations.

This recommendation was superseded by CSB Recommendation No. 2017-04-I-WI-R10, a new, more appropriate recommendation from the CSB's [Didion Milling Company Explosion and Fire Investigation Report \(2023\)](#).

C. Board Analysis and Decision

CSB policy allows a recommendation to be superseded when it is replaced by a new more appropriate recommendation to the same recipient and covering the same or similar issues. CSB Recommendation No. 2008-05-I-GA-R11 directed OSHA to proceed expeditiously with implementation of CSB Recommendation No. 2006-1-H-R1. CSB Recommendation No. 2017-04-I-WI-R10 is a more appropriate recommendation because if implemented will result in a standard providing more comprehensive protection than those envisioned by previous recommendations.

Based upon the information above, the Board voted for a status designation of "Closed – Reconsidered/Superseded" for CSB Recommendation No. 2008-05-I-GA-R11.