



U.S. Chemical Safety and
Hazard Investigation Board

NEWS RELEASE

U.S. CHEMICAL SAFETY BOARD

August 27, 2010

CSB Conducting Assessment of Ammonia Release at Millard Refrigerated Services South of Mobile, Alabama

Washington DC, August 27, 2010 - A three-member assessment team led by Mr. Johnnie Banks from the U.S. Chemical Safety Board (CSB) is deploying to the scene of Monday's anhydrous ammonia release at the Millard Refrigerated Services, a warehouse and distribution center in Theodore, Alabama, 15 miles south of Mobile.

According to media reports, more than 130 members of the public sought medical attention and four people remain hospitalized as a result of the uncontrolled ammonia release.

CSB Chairperson Rafael Moure-Eraso said, "We are seeing too many ammonia releases in our daily incident reviews. Though many are "small" releases, a high consequence accident that causes multiple injuries to members of the public is a serious one that warrants our examination. Our team will be examining the events that led to the release and ways that the community can be better protected in the future."

Anhydrous ammonia is one of the most commonly used commercial refrigerants; it is a colorless, flammable, toxic gas. For humans, high exposure levels can result in suffocation as well as severe injuries to eyes, lungs and the digestive system.

Based on the CSB's monitoring of media reports there were four high consequence incidents involving the release of anhydrous ammonia which led to a total of six fatalities in 2009:

- May 14, 2009: American Cold Storage, Louisville, KY – 2 fatalities
- June 20, 2009: Mountaire Farms, Lumber Bridge, NC – 1 fatality
- July 15, 2009: Tanner Industries, Swansea, SC – 1 fatality
- November 16, 2009: CF Industries, Rosemount, MN – 2 fatalities

The CSB is an independent federal agency charged with investigating serious chemical accidents. The agency's board members are appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate. CSB investigations look into all aspects of chemical accidents, including physical causes such as equipment failure as well as inadequacies in regulations, industry standards, and safety management systems. Please visit the CSB's website at www.csb.gov.

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