

# OSHA proposes fines against Formosa of Texas

DALLAS, Texas — The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has proposed penalties of \$330,300 against Formosa Plastics Corp. for violations at the firm's Point Comfort, Texas, plant.

OSHA cited the company for 62 violations of safety standards, including three willful violations.

"Formosa management showed a serious disregard for worker safety," Gilbert Sautler, OSHA's regional administrator in Dallas, said in announcing the citations.

"The company stopped monitoring for levels of vinyl chloride last April, putting workers at risk

of overexposure to this hazardous chemical. They also violated standards for the handling of flammable and combustible liquids and did not follow important lock out/tag out procedures during maintenance and repair operations."

OSHA's Corpus Christi Area Office conducted a complete health inspection and a process safety review at the plant following reports of a hydrogen chloride release last July. The inspection team found willful violations of the vinyl chloride standard, lock out/tag out requirements, and requirements of pressure vessel codes.

In addition, there were serious violations of safety standards for walking and working surfaces, exits, procedures with flammable and combustible liquids, use of personal protective equipment, lock out/tag out procedures, and communications to workers about hazardous materials.

A willful violation is defined as one committed with an intentional disregard of, or indifference to, the requirements of the OSHA Act and regulations.

Serious violations are defined by OSHA as those committed in which there is substantial probability that death or serious physical

harm could result, and the employer knew or should have known of the hazard.

"I am pleased that Formosa has started to correct these problems," Sautler said, adding that OSHA "will follow up to ensure full correction of the problems we found."

The Point Comfort plant manufactures vinyl chloride and employs 150 workers. A major expansion is under construction.

The company has 15 working days to contest the citations and proposed penalties before the independent Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission.