
SAFETY NEWS

Department of Space | Facilities | Safety

Safety Reminders

As the warmer temperatures arrive here in Lexington, don't forget to maintain proper lab attire: full leg coverage, foot coverage, and adequate shirt coverage. Clothing items to avoid in the lab: shorts, open-toed shoes, shirts with straps, tank shirts, etc.

<http://ehs.uky.edu/ohs/ppe.html>

Don't forget to keep your lab safety training updated. Many lab members use the summer to update this training (either online or in-person):

<https://www.as.uky.edu/training-requirements>

The nice weather also promotes lab members cycling to work. Please ensure you don't block emergency exits and/or aiseways with your bicycle.



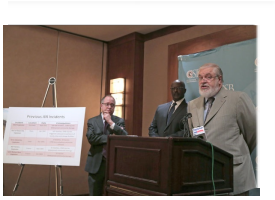
Lax Oversight a Factor in Deadly Blast

Federal investigators have determined that a lack of oversight and regulations at the local, state and federal levels contributed to the deadly fertilizer plant explosion that devastated a rural Texas town last year.

Fertilizer explosion

Five days after the anniversary of the explosion in the town of West, one of the worst industrial accidents in the state's history, the United States Chemical Safety Board released the preliminary





Chemical Safety Board, Rafael Moure-Eraso (chairman)

"The fire and explosion at West Fertilizer was preventable," Rafael Moure-Eraso, the chairman of the Chemical Safety Board, told reporters. "It should never have occurred. It resulted from the failure of a company to take the necessary steps to avert a preventable fire and explosion and from the inability of federal, state and local regulatory agencies to identify a serious hazard and correct it."

Background

The explosion at the plant in West killed 14 people, wounded more than 200 others and destroyed or damaged hundreds of the town's 700 homes. At 7:31 p.m. on April 17, 2013, the first 911 call came in about a fire at the plant. Twenty-two minutes later, at 7:53 p.m., after the fire intensified, an explosion ripped through the plant and the nearby residential neighborhoods, leaving a crater 93 feet wide and 10 feet deep. Between 40 to 60 tons of ammonium nitrate was kept in the warehouse, and 100 tons more was in a rail car adjacent to the plant, in addition to two large tanks of another chemical, anhydrous ammonia.

findings of its investigation at a news conference here on Tuesday. Officials with the agency highlighted a series of shortcomings, both in how the West Fertilizer Company handled the agricultural chemical that touched off the explosion — ammonium nitrate — and in how various agencies oversaw the company's operations and storage of the chemical.

White pellets of ammonium nitrate, a fertilizer sold to farmers in the area, were stored in a wooden warehouse in wooden bins, inside a building without a sprinkler system. No federal regulations exist preventing a company from storing the chemical in such a way. The volunteer firefighters who rushed to the plant to fight a fire that broke out there before the explosion were largely unaware of the dangers of ammonium nitrate, and a local emergency planning committee had not adopted an emergency response plan for the plant. Even if they had, Texas has no statewide fire code that would have established a minimum set of standards.

Ammonium nitrate is stored at more than 1,300 facilities around the country, but there are no zoning regulations at any level of government to prevent such plants from being located near residential areas, officials said Tuesday. Other countries have more rigorous standards covering both the storage of the chemical and the proximity to other buildings.

"Lax Oversight Cited as Factor in Deadly Blast at Texas Plant" New York Times, April 22, 2014

