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## **Oregon OSHA fines Americold Logistics \$740,400 for safety violations in Milwaukie**

(Salem) - The Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services, Occupational Safety and Health Division (Oregon OSHA) has fined Americold Logistics a total of \$740,400 for extensive safety and health violations found during a Sept. 16, 2009 inspection at the company's Milwaukie facility. By not having proper safeguards in place to contain ammonia, the company was putting workers in serious danger of injury or death due to a major chemical release or explosion, Oregon OSHA found.

"Ammonia carries significant risks to workers, particularly in large quantities," said Michael Wood, Oregon OSHA administrator. "Due to the size of this facility, there is the potential for a large-scale release."

Oregon OSHA cited Americold Logistics, a national refrigerated warehouse operation, for 10 willful violations, four serious repeat violations, and 22 other serious violations of the Oregon Safe Employment Act. The bulk of the violations are related to the company's system for handling the hazardous chemical anhydrous ammonia, which is common in commercial warehouses and can be explosive. Ammonia can also cause severe alkaline chemical burns to skin, eyes, and the respiratory system. If a chemical leak occurs, ammonia released from such a system will expand rapidly, making it difficult to contain.

Among other issues, the inspection identified excessive ice build up, creating the potential for system damage and in some cases encasing valves, making it difficult, if not impossible, to close them in the event of an emergency. The inspection also identified significant corrosion of pipes and missing drain valve plugs, making ammonia release more likely.

Oregon OSHA previously conducted an accident investigation at the Milwaukie location in 2007, after two employees were sent to the hospital following an ammonia compressor explosion. As a result of that inspection, which was limited in scope, 18 violations were issued.

"Protecting workers from highly hazardous chemicals should be the result of a credible program of inspections, hazard identification, and preventive maintenance to ensure the system's integrity," Wood said. "The safety of the facility's workers must not be left to chance."

Another critical component in such a complex facility is accurately documenting regular inspections and testing, to allow for appropriate tracking and follow-up. In the Americold facility, the inspection found that company managers had documented the presence of safety measures that were not in place.

Oregon OSHA also cited the employer for violations of asbestos safety standards, due to damaged insulation.

The company has 30 days to appeal the citation.

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Oregon OSHA, a division of the Department of Consumer and Business Services, enforces the state's workplace safety and health rules and works to improve workplace safety and health for all Oregon workers. The Department of Consumer and Business Services is Oregon's largest business regulatory and consumer protection agency. For more information, visit [www.orosha.org](http://www.orosha.org).