

April 30, 2009

DOE Cites UChicago Argonne, LLC for Worker Safety and Health Violations

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today issued a Preliminary Notice of Violation (PNOV) to UChicago Argonne, LLC, for violations of the Department's worker safety and health regulations. UChicago Argonne is the managing and operating contractor for DOE's Argonne National Laboratory (ANL), located in Argonne, Illinois, which is about 25 miles southwest of Chicago. ANL is one of DOE's oldest and largest national laboratories for science and engineering research.

The PNOV cites multiple violations associated with two incidents that occurred in the same building at ANL in March 2008. The violations include failures to identify and assess workplace hazards; establish controls to prevent and abate hazards; provide adequate training and information to employees; and adhere to safety procedures. The proposed civil penalty is \$280,000.

The first incident occurred when two small glass tubes containing chemicals were being heated in a laboratory oven. During the heating process, an unanticipated over pressurization occurred, causing the tubes to explode and rupture the oven door. One of the chemicals released into the laboratory by the explosion was arsenic, which is a carcinogen. The smoke detector in the laboratory alarmed, and the building was evacuated. Because the laboratory room was unoccupied at the time of the explosion, no one was injured or exposed to arsenic as a result of the incident.

The second incident occurred when a researcher experienced symptoms indicative of carbon monoxide overexposure while working with a glove bag containing several liters of carbon monoxide. The employee was taken to a local emergency room, where tests confirmed the exposure. The employee was treated and released later the same day, returned to work with restrictions the following day and was cleared for work with no restrictions a week later. No other workers were affected. ANL temporarily suspended all experimental laboratory work in the building following this event.

The Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003 authorizes DOE to take regulatory actions under 10 C.F.R. Part 851, Worker Safety and Health Program, against DOE contractors for violations of its worker safety and health requirements. DOE's Enforcement Program encourages DOE contractors to identify and correct worker safety and health deficiencies at an early stage, before they contribute to or result in more serious events.

Additional details on this and other enforcement actions are available from the [Office of Enforcement](#).

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