

2015-CB-45

For Immediate Release
June 25, 2015

Injuries to Workers from Formaldehyde Gas Result in \$50,000 Fine to Employer

KITCHENER, ON – Ultra Manufacturing Ltd., a manufacturer and supplier of automotive interior mechanisms and decorative components, has pleaded guilty and has been fined \$50,000 after workers were exposed to formaldehyde gas in the workplace.

On August 10, 2013, workers were attending their duties at the company's premises at 640 Conrad Place in Waterloo. A technician was operating an injection molding machine that melts and molds different types of plastics into various components. The worker was in the process of changing over the machine by purging it of one type of plastic for another plastic that required a higher temperature to melt. The Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for the first type of plastic notes that if it is over-heated it will release formaldehyde gas, creating such symptoms as burning and tearing of the eyes, skin sensitization and irritation of the upper respiratory tract.

After the technician performed the change-over using a purging procedure, the molding machine was set to process the second plastic and the temperature on the machine was raised. However, the purging process did not fully purge all of the first plastic from the machine. As the machine was now running at a higher temperature, the first plastic began to degrade and off-gas formaldehyde.

As a result, several workers in the same area began to suffer adverse health effects, including itching and watery eyes and sore throats.

Team leads contacted supervisors and the area was evacuated, and large bay doors were opened to ventilate the area. In total, six workers sustained adverse effects consistent with exposure to formaldehyde gas.

The MSDS for the plastic recommends, among other measures, that personal protection be provided to workers involved in processing the plastic and that local exhaust (ventilation) be provided to control employee exposure to dust or process vapors.

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Ultra Manufacturing pleaded guilty to failing as an employer to take every precaution reasonable in the circumstance for the protection of a worker – that is, to failing to take the reasonable precaution of providing for local ventilation in the area where the plastic was being processed – contrary to the Occupational Health and Safety Act. The company was fined \$50,000 by Justice of the Peace Michael A. Cuthbertson in Kitchener court on June 23, 2015.

In addition to the fine, the court imposed a 25-per-cent victim fine surcharge as required by the Provincial Offences Act. The surcharge is credited to a special provincial government fund to assist victims of crime.

For further information:

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Court Information at a Glance

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| Location: | Provincial Offences Court/Ontario Court of Justice 77 Queen Street North, courtroom 102 Kitchener, Ontario |
| Judge: | Justice of the Peace Michael A. Cuthbertson |
| Date of Sentencing: | June 23, 2015 |
| Defendant: | Ultra Manufacturing Ltd. 100 Washburn Drive Kitchener, Ontario |
| Matter: | Occupational health and safety |
| Conviction: | Occupational Health and Safety Act Section 25(2)(h) |
| Crown Counsel: | Steven Succi |



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