

2014-CB-26

For Immediate Release
June 13, 2014

Vale Canada Limited Fined \$150,000 After Workers Injured

ST. CATHARINES, ON – Vale Canada Ltd., a mining and refinery company, has been fined \$150,000 after an explosion at a Port Colborne refinery resulted in injuries to five workers.

On October 18, 2012, a sulphur dust explosion and ensuing fire took place in the #2 Research Station of Vale’s refinery located at 187 Davis Street, Port Colborne. Five workers in the area at the time were affected or injured by the explosion.

The research station operated as a test plant to produce specialized sulphur agglomerates or briquettes for Vale’s subsidiary Indonesia operation. The plant was newly constructed and had been running for less than a month prior to the explosion. The workers in the plant were contract workers from an employment agency.

The raw materials used in the process included sulphur in a powder form. There was no indication of any abnormal operation before the explosion.

Although still operating as a test run, the facility was gradually increasing both the size and run of product on the day of the accident. Witnesses observed increasing sulphur dust levels. In its powder form, sulphur is explosive.

Workers were hit by the force of the explosion and struck by flying debris which caused some workers to fall to the floor; some workers had their clothing burnt. Workers were wearing personal protective equipment, including half-masks, glasses, safety boots, leather gloves and ear plugs. Injuries included second-degree burns, bruising and muscle soreness.

The Ministry of Labour’s investigation determined that the lack of adequate sulphur dust control and failure to eliminate all potential sources of ignition created a risk of explosion and fire. A Ministry of Labour engineer determined that the most likely source of ignition for the sulphur dust was friction or static discharge inside a conveyor. This process was likely to produce a flammable mixture of sulphur dust and air and was carried out in an area without a system of ventilation which could adequately remove the dust; it provided a potential source of ignition and was without sufficient vents, baffles, chokes, dampers or other means to reduce the effects of any explosion.

Further, an adequate supply of a suitable inerting agent was not available or used at all times for blanketing and purging of all equipment.

Vale Canada Ltd. pleaded guilty to failing as an employer to ensure that the measures and procedures prescribed by law were carried out in the workplace.

The fine was imposed by Justice of the Peace Brett A. Kelly. 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:

Media contact:

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416-326-7405

Court Information at a Glance

Location:	Ontario Court of Justice 71 King Street St. Catharines, Ontario
Judge:	Justice of the Peace Brett A. Kelly
Date of Sentencing:	June 13, 2014
Defendant:	Vale Canada Limited 200 Bay Street Royal Bank Plaza, South Tower Toronto, Ontario
Matter:	Occupational health and safety
Conviction:	Occupational Health and Safety Act (Mines and Mining Plants Regulation) Section 25(1)(c)
Crown Counsel:	Daniel Kleiman



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