

Explosion at Oracle Packaging Curtailed by 'Booming'

HazWOPER Training Pays Off

On February 19, 2007, Oracle Packaging of Winston-Salem experienced an explosion in its aluminum rolling facility, severely damaging an 80,000 square foot building. The company manufactures aluminum foil, so had within its confines 100,000 pounds of molten aluminum, 30,000 gallons of fuel oil and 30,000 gallons of various solvents.

Fortunately, due to training they received from IES, not one of these hazardous materials escaped the property and no one was injured.

Oracle Packaging's health and safety manager and fire brigade chief, Joel Rappoport, prudently had sent two employees from his company to learn the techniques necessary to contain hazardous materials in the event of such an incident.

Their instructor, environmental extension specialist Mac McNulty, had taught the fundamentals including 'booming' streams with a 1 foot wide sock-type apparatus filled with sawdust. Oracle used this technique on February 19, and anchored the 'boom' on either side of a stream with the intent of not allowing contaminants to pass through. They were successful.



The second stream they tackled, normally a dry creek-bed, was now flowing with 5,000 gallons of water per minute due to the fire fighting effort. Again using McNulty's advice, they built an underflow dam to trap any possible floating contaminants.

The Oracle brigade also sealed catch basins and turned off any piping valves to stop possible leaks. They had done such a good job that the Environmental Protection Agency left just two hours after the explosion, having found no subsequent issues.

"If we can control a spill, we control our own destiny," said Rappoport. The training they received from IES fosters independence, only calling on the city's resources in extreme emergencies. Oracle is well-versed in managing their contaminants. "We don't have to hope the city does things correctly. We know what we need to do to be safe."

Shortly after the February incident, McNulty was invited to Oracle to instruct all 38 members of the company's fire brigade on OSHA Hazmat training. The benefits of conducting the training on-site, allows McNulty to tailor a program based on their specific hazards and environmental constraints. The drills that are performed use the client's equipment, establishing a higher degree of comfort for those that would be called on in an emergency.

"It was just a good thing we found Mac," said Rappoport.

McNulty provides hazardous waste operations, emergency response and incident spill response education, training, exercise evaluations, and program development to North Carolina businesses and local, state and federal agencies. He is also an authorized instructor for OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) Training Institute located at NC State University.