

Company Fined in Fatal Paint Vapor Explosion

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has cited a dredging company for multiple alleged serious violations after one of its workers was killed and a second worker was injured in a paint vapor explosion in July 2011.

Shawn Austin, 28, of Nashville, TN, died three days after paint vapors became ignited by a light that sparked. A second worker, Saul Hernandez, 26, suffered severe burn injuries, but survived. The victims had been painting the inside of a pontoon boat dredge when the blast occurred.

Austin was married with three children.

Dredge & Marine Co. of Millersville, TN, was issued \$46,600 in proposed penalties for serious violations alleging inadequate exhaust ventilation, failure to use explosion-proof lighting, using an extension cord that lacked a ground prong, exposing employees to explosion and fire hazards from a non-explosion proof fan with nonferrous blades and failure to ensure paint buckets, spray guns and cell phones were properly stored to prevent sparking.

Other alleged violations include failure to permit the bonding of spray guns and metallic parts, failure to provide fall protection to employees working from the barge deck, failure to test the oxygen content of a confined space, not training workers to perform duties safely in a confined space, not providing a qualified shipyard rescue team, failure to stop work to verify the confined space was safe for entry after spray painting and failure to continuously monitor the enclosed space to ensure the atmosphere was safe.