Gas Cylinder Safety Fatality File

PINELLAS PARK – Two federal agencies are investigating an explosion last month that killed a man who died while moving a pressurized gas cylinder filled with MagneGas, a product from an alternative fuel company of the same name in Pinellas Park.

The incident took place in Suwannee County in North Florida and is the third-known explosion involving a MagneGas Corp. container since 2010. Two people have been killed and one injured in the blasts.

That gas was in a pressurized cylinder at Suwannee Iron Works & Fence on June 6 when Andrew Reynolds, 32, moved it and it exploded, a Suwannee County Sheriff's Office report said.

The blast amputated Reynolds' legs from the knees down and caused significant trauma from the waist down. He was pronounced dead at the scene. The sheriff's report, as well as a July 13 medical examiner's report, said the cause of death was trauma from the blast as well as burns.

Reynolds left a wife and two small children.

The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration had opened an investigation into the company last month following an explosion, but declined to discuss what happened.

This is the second fatality involving a MagneGas cylinder that exploded. In 2015, Michael Sheppard, a 29-year-old Safety Harbor resident working for MagneGas, was killed while performing a routine procedure on a MagneGas cylinder. Sheppard and fellow employee Eric Newell were venting the container, which removes excess fluids, when it exploded.

Sheppard died from injuries caused by the blast, and Newell suffered permanent hearing loss and burns.

Following the 2015 explosion, OSHA opened an investigation, citing the company for 23 “serious” violations and four “other” violations and a $52,045 fine. MagneGas, OSHA said, failed to properly train employees to handle hazardous material and had several tools around the area that could produce a spark and thus cause a fire or explosion. OSHA could not determine the cause of the explosion.

A third explosion took place in 2010, when a MagneGas cylinder exploded at the company’s plant, then located in Tarpon Springs, and crashed through the roof of a church next door. According to a Tarpon Springs Fire Department report, no one was in the Community of Christ church when the container plunged through the roof just before 3 p.m.