

OSHA Investigation of Redstone Arsenal Deaths: Willful Violations

On behalf of Johnston, Moore & Thompson

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The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has completed its investigation of the May explosion at the Redstone Arsenal that resulted in the [wrongful deaths](#) of two civilian workers. In a statement released Friday, OSHA cited Amtec for two willful and four serious workplace safety violations that directly contributed to the fatal accident and has proposed a fine of \$134,000 against the Huntsville-based company that employed the two men.

Redstone Arsenal spokesperson Dan O'Boyle told the Huntsville Times on Saturday that Arsenal officials had not yet reviewed the particulars of the OSHA report. The Arsenal is performing its own investigation of the industrial accident.

OSHA Says Amtec Failed to Follow Safety Rules and Army Standard Operating Procedures; Amtec Denies Putting Workers at Risk

Amtec "failed to ensure the proper equipment was being used," said OSHA area director Roberto Sanchez, even though it knew the Arsenal job was hazardous, "while also allowing the workers to process the material in excess of 10 times the amount of explosives according to the Army's standard operating procedures."

The two Amtec employees were separating ammonium perchlorate from other chemicals in rocket propellant when the explosion occurred. The two men suffered burns to more than 90 percent of their bodies and died later that day.

OSHA cited Amtec for two "willful" safety violations, which means it found Amtec had acted either intentionally or with willful indifference to worker safety and health by "exposing workers to fire and explosive hazards by not verifying the suitability of the equipment being used to process ammonium perchlorate and n-Butanol slurry and for operating the system adjacent to a decanter centrifuge instead of in a remote location."

OSHA also cited Amtec for four "serious" safety violations, meaning that the company knew or should have known about a hazard that was likely to result in serious [worker injury](#) or wrongful death.

OSHA cited the storage of more than 120 gallons of n-Butanol near the location of the ammonium perchlorate processing as a serious safety violation. It also cited Amtec for allowing workers to dispense n-Butanol from one container to another without proper bonding or

grounding, creating an ignition hazard. It also says that ignition sources were allowed an area where flammable hazards could accumulate.

Amtec's attorney, Rod Steakley, called OSHA's statement "materially inaccurate" because, for example, the n-Butanol "was not involved in the explosion at all and was present (and) intact after the incident."

OSHA also cited Amtec for failing to provide flame-retardant clothing for the workers. Steakley said that Amtec had in fact provided receipts to OSHA proving that they had purchased protective clothing for the men.

"Great lengths were taken to ensure the safety of our employees," Steakley said.

Amtec has 15 business days from the receipt of the OSHA report to respond. They can choose to pay the fine, request an informal conference, or formally dispute the citations, and it appears they intend to dispute them.

"Amtec does not believe it has engaged in the alleged willful or serious violations," said Steakley, "and looks forward to the opportunities to address these claims when given the opportunity to do so."

Source: The Huntsville Times, "[OSHA proposes penalties, cites 'willful' and serious violations in Amtec explosion on Redstone Arsenal](#)," Mike Marshall, November 6, 2010