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**The True Cost of Poor Housekeeping**

Ruwac constantly strives to educate the industrial world on combustible dust safety and the importance of using approved explosion-proof vacuum equipment. Following a recent penalty levied against one New Hampshire-based wood pellet maker, we cannot stress enough the seriousness of combustible dust hazards or the severe consequences for failing to acknowledge OSHA regulations.

What began as an investigation over a fire on October 20, 2011 at the New England Wood Pellet LLC has now resulted in $147,000 worth of proposed fines after it was discovered the manufacturer did not take proper repercussions in using OSHA-approved vacuum equipment and enacting proper housekeeping measures to eliminate the risk of an accident.

According to the official OSHA citation issued on April 17, 2012, New England Wood Pellet was issued a serious repeated offense after they were found to be using three regular shop-vac style vacuum cleaners in hazardous locations within their facility to remove combustible dust off of the floor and from machinery. None of these vacuums were intrinsically safe nor were they rated for wood pellet dust removal. OSHA had previously issued this same offense to New England Wood Pellet back in March of ’96, and their failure to fix this issue has now amounted to a hefty $70,000 worth of fines.

In other instances of the citation, New England Wood Pellet was levied with another $7,000 worth of fines for irresponsible housekeeping methods. Instead of using certified explosion-proof vacuum cleaners to remove dust particulates off surfaces, they used 30psi compressed air to blow down and clear away the dust. This method only spreads the hazardous material throughout the workspace and into the air instead of containing it, thus increasing the risk of an explosion.

OSHA inspectors also detected numerous fire and explosion hazards including the absence of a spark detection system to prevent embers and fires from spreading from the pellet conveyor to the dust collection systems. This likely set off the October 20th fire, which started in the pellet mill and traveled to the dust collector, triggering multiple explosions. Luckily, there were no casualties or injuries.

Our duty as the leading maker of industrial vacuum cleaners is to not only provide manufacturers with the right equipment to carry on operations safely and efficiently, but to bring awareness to the hazards of combustible dust and the failure to take action on them may present. Ruwac’s explosion-proof vacuums are certified to meet all NFPA standards and OSHA regulations. Had a company like New England Wood Pellet decided to invest their resources in Ruwac, they very likely would have avoided the initial fire at their facility alongside the subsequent OSHA investigation and proposed fines that came along with it.

To read OSHA’s official citation on New England Wood Pellet LLC visit: <http://www.osha.gov/ooc/citations/New-England-Wood-Pellet-108074-04-17-2012.pdf>

For more information about Ruwac’s explosion-proof vacuum line visit: <http://www.ruwac.com/explosion-proof-vacuums>