Cheese Division (USA)

317 Rosera Street
Lena, WI 54139

October 4, 2019

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Attn: Rick Joslin – Hydrogeologist / NER Spills Coordinator – Remediation & Redevelopment Bureau
625 East County Road Y, Suite 700
Oshkosh, WI 54901-9731

RE: Chlorine Gas Release 09/19/2019
Saputo Cheese USA Inc. – Waupun, WI
SERTS ID # 20190919NE20-1

Mr. Joslin,

This letter is our formal written notification of the chlorine gas release that occurred on 09/19/19 at our Saputo Cheese USA Inc facility located at N3545 County Hwy EE in Waupun WI. The chlorine gas release started at 7:20 am. Employees began evacuating at approximately 7:25 am and plant personnel notified 911/Hazmat at 7:33 am. I reported the release to WDNR/WEM spill hotline at 7:43 am and to the National Response Center (NRC) at 7:53 am.

Approximately 68 pounds of chlorine gas was released, to the atmosphere, from a chlorine gas cylinder that is used for well water treatment. A maintenance technician had noticed that the chlorine level in the well water was low which triggered him to check the chlorine cylinder in use. The flow bead on the injection unit (attached to the chlorine cylinder) was indicating no flow and so the maintenance tech thought the tank was empty. He turned the valve on the tank, thinking he was closing it when really it was being opened further. Then he undid the fastener connecting the injector unit to the tank, causing the injector unit to slide down the tank and that is when the gas began releasing. The tech could not get the unit reconnected with the gas coming out, he and his spotter evacuated the area immediately.

The maintenance tech that was changing the chlorine cylinder, was exposed to the chlorine gas and so he was transported to the hospital via ambulance. His spotter was also taken to the hospital but for precautionary measures only. Both were released from the hospital the same day of the incident and returned to work the next day.

Several area fire departments as well as Fond du Lac Fire/Rescue Hazmat team responded to the incident. The Hazmat team stopped the release at approximately 12:00 pm by closing the valve on the chlorine cylinder. After stopping the release, the Hazmat team could ventilate the affected areas. This was done by setting up several fans at one end of the affected area and blowing the chlorine gas to the other end and out to the atmosphere. After ventilating for over an hour the Fire and Hazmat team checked interior rooms and exterior areas to determine whether they were safe for reentry. At 2:00 pm Saputo was given the all clear from Fond du Lac Fire/Rescue Hazmat team for reentry into the facility.

After some investigation immediately following the release it was found that one of the well chlorine pump circuits had tripped and so that is why the flow bead on the injection unit was indicating no flow. On 9/20/19 visual alarms were added to the facility's SCADA system so maintenance technicians can see when a chlorine pump is without flow. Also, standard operating procedures and training on chlorine gas cylinder change out, handling, and troubleshooting will be provided. Furthermore, the facility is evaluating the installation of chlorine detection into the alarm system or replacing chlorine gas with a different system. The placement of the windsocks at the facility is also being evaluated, so they are visible from all directions. Lastly, a preventative maintenance schedule will be implemented to inspect and clean the chlorine injection pumps.

Enclosed is a map showing the location of the release and ventilation path through the tunnel. Additionally, I've included pictures of the chlorine cylinder which were taken after the release was stopped and Saputo was given the all clear to reenter.

Should you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me via email or phone at alison.mcvane@saputo.com or (920)370-7828.

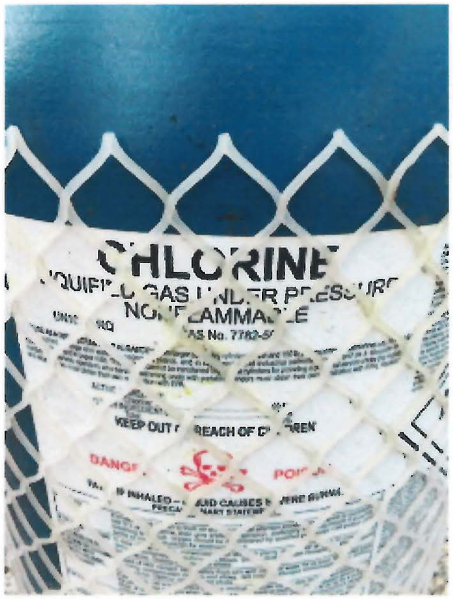
Thanks,

Alison McVane

Alison McVane
Environmental Manager, SCUSA & SDF

Cc: Debra Guzman, Director of Environmental Affairs SCUSA & SDF
John Hoffner, Plant Manager Saputo Waupun

Saputo Waupun WI
Chlorine Gas Release 09/19/19
Legend
Chlorine Gas Release Location
Tunnel (from intake to cheese plant)
ventilation path
Chlorine Gas Release Location
Google earth
© 2018 Google
600 ft
N


CHLORINE