Dodging Disaster: Tribe Mediterranean Foods

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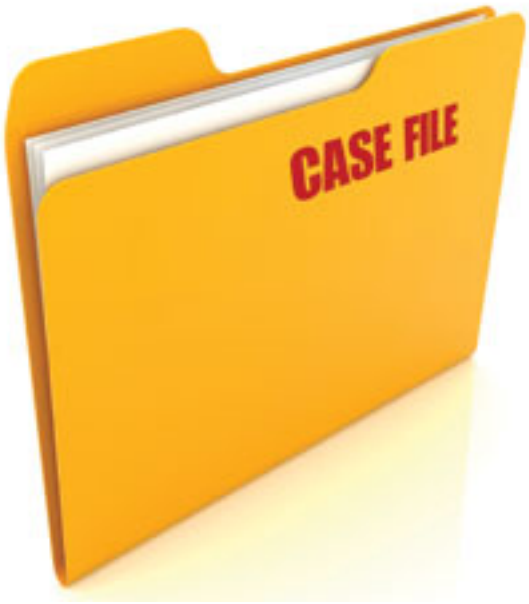
This article first appeared in March 2013's "iPurchase: Safety First ***[1]***"



***Chem.Info*'s recurring Dodging Disasters feature details the missteps and safety oversights that led to a recent plant disaster and provides actionable information to help processors avoid the same mistakes. Today we take a look at a recent incident at Tribe Mediterranean Foods.**

Tribe Mediterranean Foods, Inc.
Taunton, Mass.
OSHA Citation Date: June 12, 2012
OSHA Fine: $702,300.00

Daniel Callazo was killed at a Tribe Mediterranean Foods hummus processing plant in Mississippi on December 16, 2011 when he was pulled into a grinder he was cleaning.

OSHA launched an investigation that day and released a Citation and Notification of Penalty the following June. The administration hit Tribe Mediterranean Foods with 18 alleged violations of workplace safety standards and proposed a whopping $702,300 in fines. In addition to what OSHA claimed was woefully inadequate safety training provided to workers, the agency alleged the following violations:

- lack of adequate drainage in wet rooms.
- lack of guard rails on elevated surfaces.
- inadequate guarding of rotating blades on blending tanks.

- keeping conductors and equipment not rated for moisture in wet areas.

In addition to widely accessible safety training resources, engineering consultants and equipment vendors able to assist in plant and equipment safety design are available to consult with food companies to ensure that manufacturers have appropriate measures and guards in place to prevent senseless accidents like this one.

The OSHA document also reported that workers assigned to certain tasks were regularly exposed to “fire hazards, arc flash and blast hazards, and electric shock hazards up to 480 volts.” Like VPP Group, Tribe Mediterranean Foods was placed in OSHA’s Severe Violator Enforcement Program.

“The employer knew it needed to train these workers so they could protect themselves against just this type of hazard but failed to do so. The result was a needless and avoidable loss of life,” said Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA, Dr. David Michaels, in a press release published by the agency. “In this case, Tribe Mediterranean Foods’ knowledge and continuous disregard for an obvious and deadly hazard was so pronounced that we are issuing seven willful citations for lack of training, one for each untrained worker exposed to the hazard.”

A spokesperson told the Associated Press that the company “deeply regrets” the accident

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