

Agency Seeks \$60,000 from Sinclair after Refinery Fire

MEAD GRUVER, Associated Press

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) — Wyoming workplace safety regulators have handed down a dozen citations and are seeking more than \$60,000 in fines against Sinclair Oil for a refinery fire that injured two workers.

The May 25 fire at the Sinclair Refinery in Sinclair in south-central Wyoming was the second of three fires at the refinery since early May that have injured a total of seven workers.

The Wyoming Department of Workforce Services Occupational Safety and Health Administration Office classified 11 of the 12 citations it announced Friday as serious. An investigation found hazards that might have contributed to the accident, the state OSHA office said in a release.

"All employers have a moral and legal responsibility to ensure the health and safety of their employees. Unfortunately, the OSHA investigation found Sinclair did not live up to its critical obligation," Joan Evans, director of the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services, said in the release.

Alleged violations included failing to inspect equipment and correct deficiencies, and failing to develop and implement safe work practices. Citations also were issued for lack of employee training and operating procedures, and for having inadequate first aid supplies.

Sinclair has and will continue to work in good faith with Wyoming OSHA "to embrace and implement their findings," a spokesman for Salt Lake City, Utah-based Sinclair said in an emailed statement Friday.

"Sinclair takes responsibility for, and is working with a great sense of urgency to correct safety deficiencies that may be present at the refinery," Clint Ensign said in the statement.

The company has improved inspections and repair of piping and equipment while conducting safety audits, workplace observations and safety training, the statement said.

The company has added "critical safety personnel," the statement said, while working with other Wyoming refineries to share and implement best industry safety practices.

Under state regulations, Sinclair has 15 days since receiving the citations to comply, request an informal hearing with Wyoming OSHA, or contest the citations and

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\$60,250 in proposed penalties before the Wyoming Occupational Safety and Health Commission.

Meanwhile, the Department of Workforce Services has brought in a federal OSHA team to review the refinery and its safety procedures. The state agency also has required Sinclair to bring in external, independent safety auditors and has asked Sinclair managers to meet with Wyoming OSHA every two weeks to discuss progress updates.

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