

Lanxess spilled 700 lbs of toxic chemicals in 8 minutes on 12/15/04, report shows

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ADDYSTON -- Lanxess reported that they spewed 700 pounds of acrylonitrile into the air in eight minutes on December 15, 2005, according to documents the company filed this week with Hamilton County Department of Environmental Services. Lanxess' permit allows them to release only 8 pounds of acrylonitrile during the particular chemical process where the accident occurred. Laws require the company to report any releases over 100 pounds.

According to the report, the release was high enough to set off alarms at the plant, turning off lights and signaling workers to put on respirators. Lanxess' internal investigation concluded that the accident was caused when a critical step was missed in the batch manufacturing process, causing over pressurization of the reactor.

Hamilton County Department of Environmental Services has not commented on whether this accident will be issued a notice of violation and/or a fine.

Lanxess' neighbors knew something was wrong at the plant on December 15, when they smelled foul rotten egg odors from 3:55 PM to after 4:30 PM. According to the report, the spill occurred from 3:40 p.m. to 3:56 p.m. Unlike their large spill of acrylonitrile in October, Lanxess did notify a local public official to give preliminary information at the time of the December spill, but did not cite a quantity of the release and did not mention that the plant's acrylonitrile alarms had gone off. Exposure to acrylonitrile can damage the heart, lungs, gastrointestinal and nervous systems.

This is Lanxess' 16th accident since it began 'operating independently' within the Bayer Corporation on July 1, 2004. Nine of the 16 accidents have released toxic chemicals, and three of them have been releases of over 100 lbs of acrylonitrile. This spill is very comparable to the June 9, 1999 acrylonitrile release. On this day Lanxess (then Bayer Plastics) released 371 lbs of acrylonitrile and sent three people to the hospital due to nausea and closed down a local business. Bayer was fined over \$30,000 for the June 1999 accident.