

## MAGNABLEND FIRE CONTINUES TO SINGE – COMPANY FINED \$45,000 BY OSHA



Magnablend Chemical Co has been cited by The Occupational Safety and Health Administration for seven serious safety violations and levied a fine of \$45,000, for the fire and explosion that took place on its Waxahachie facility on October 3, 2011. Though the company maintained that the fire was caused by excessive steam caused during the production of a wastewater treatment, investigators, after a six month investigation, concluded that it could perhaps have been avoided if there was a proper ventilation system in place. Waxahachie Fire Chief David Hudgins had put the cause of the fire, to the company's decision of mixing a far greater amount of chemicals than normal, causing a dangerous build of highly inflammable hydrogen gas. A spark from a machine triggered the explosion and fire that engulfed and leveled the plant. However, the massive fire burned the facility to the ground and even though no one was seriously injured, it forced the evacuation of around a thousand local residents. There were also reports of two workers of a waste facility becoming ill owing to inhaling toxic fumes during the cleanup. Jack Rector, OSHA's area director in Fort Worth said, "Magnablend exposed its workers to fire hazards by failing to provide adequate ventilation that would have removed flammable hydrogen and other vapours. OSHA's standards must be followed to prevent injuries and illnesses. It is fortunate that no one was injured." The safety violations that Magnablend stands accused of, according to OSHA are, "failing to conduct a hazard assessment, install a sufficient ventilation system, train workers in specific hazardous chemical protection procedures, evaluate respiratory inhalation hazards, ensure that the fire sprinkler system was adequate, use electrical equipment in accordance with its labeling, document the classification of hazardous locations for electrical purposes and ensure that electrical equipment was considered safe for the location where it was used." Critics however, are unhappy despite the penalty and feel it is insignificant. David Vance, a resident who is fighting Magnablend's decision to relocate to their currently defunct Superconducting Super Collider site said, "I think the citation fine is way too low. That's saying that people's lives are only worth \$45,000." Magnablend will either have to cough up the penalty or within 15 days or contest the citations and proposed penalties before the independent Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission.