

MGP Responds To Chemical Cloud Probe Results

(KAIR)--Working with investigators, reviewing safety procedures, and financially assisting those who were affected.

That's a snapshot of the steps that continue to be taken by Atchison based MGP Ingredients following a toxic chemical release at the company's specialty wheat protein and starch facility in Atchison last year.

The accident left 140 persons seeking hospital treatment, and led to the evacuation of schools, businesses, and some homes.

The outline of the ongoing, internal review of the situation comes in the form of a press release issued by the company. It follows a press conference held in Kansas City Wednesday by the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board. At that time, the independent federal agency revealed its preliminary findings into the investigation focused on the October 21 chemical release.

The investigation so far reveals that human error and improper labeling helped lead to the accidental mixing of sulfuric acid, unloaded from a tanker truck, into a fixed sodium hypochlorite tank at the plant, causing the two materials to combine and produce chlorine gas.

The statement from MGP reveals the company, over the past six months, has been working with members of the community who sought medical attention. The statement says MGP has been covering costs associated with treatment, paying medical bills and related expenses, "including ambulance services and radiology and pharmacy bills of 134 individuals who sought care at area providers."

Additionally, the company says it "has cooperated fully with federal, state, and local agencies in their ongoing investigations," and has hired the engineering firm Burns and McDonnell "to provide a comprehensive review" of the company's loading, unloading, and chemical storage methods in order to strengthen the safety of MGP's systems.

The press release also expresses thanks for the assistance provided during the accident by emergency responders, and says the company has "worked proactively with City and County first responders to assess collective response and further augment emergency response planning."

The investigation by the CSB is expected to result in additional recommendations regarding safety procedures.

Those findings will be revealed in the fall.

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