



# U.S. CHEMICAL SAFETY BOARD

An independent federal agency investigating chemical accidents to protect workers, the public, and the environment.

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## Chemical Safety Board Deploying to West Fertilizer Plant Accident

### CSB Deploys to Massive Explosion and Fire at Fertilizer Plant Near Waco, Texas

A large investigation team from the U.S. Chemical Safety Board (CSB) is deploying to the scene of a massive fire and explosion at the West Fertilizer Plant located in West, Texas, north of Waco.

Local emergency officials have told the CSB of a large number of injuries and destroyed buildings in the town.

The investigative team will be led CSB Western Regional Office Director Don Holmstrom and is scheduled to arrive in Texas Thursday afternoon.

The CSB is an independent federal agency charged with investigating industrial chemical accidents. The agency's board members are appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate. CSB investigations look into all aspects of chemical accidents, including physical causes such as equipment failure as well as inadequacies in regulations, industry standards, and safety management systems.

For more information, contact Hillary Cohen [hillary.cohen@csb.gov](mailto:hillary.cohen@csb.gov) 202.446.8094 (cell) or Sandy Gilmour [sandy.gilmour@csb.gov](mailto:sandy.gilmour@csb.gov) 202.251.5496 (cell).

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US

# REPORT: TEXAS FERTILIZER PLANT WAS CITED IN 2006 FOR PERMIT VIOLATION AND AUTHORITIES CONCERNED ABOUT POSSIBLE AMMONIA LEAK

Apr. 18, 2013 5:20am | Sharona Schwartz



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### Gun Grabbers HATE This



A swath of debris is strewn after an explosion at a fertilizer plant in West, Texas, Wednesday night. (AP Photo/Michael Ainsworth)

The Associated Press reported early Thursday morning that the Texas fertilizer plant in which the massive explosion took place Wednesday was cited in 2006 for failing to obtain or qualify for a permit.

More than 100 were injured and an as yet unknown number of people were killed.

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Fertilizer Plant Explosion North Of Waco - Evacuations Ordered

The AP reports:

The Texas fertilizer plant where an explosion injured more than 100 people and killed an unknown number of others was cited for failing to obtain or to qualify for a permit in 2006.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality investigated West Fertilizer on June 20, 2006, after receiving a complaint June 9 of a strong ammonia smell. Agency records show that the person who lodged the complaint said the ammonia smell was “very bad last night” and lingered until after he or she went to bed.

Wednesday night’s explosion leveled the plant and severely damaged other area buildings. Authorities say people were killed, but they don’t know how many.

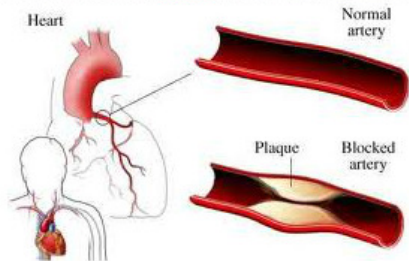
Authorities were still trying to evacuate area homes early Thursday morning.

Waco Police Spokesman Sgt. William Patrick Swanton was quoted by ABC News overnight saying officials continued to be **concerned** about leaks of ammonia from the plant’s ruins, as well as the possibility of residual explosions.

The U.S. Chemical Safety Board (CSB) announced it is deploying a “large investigation team” to the scene of the explosion, which is expected to arrive Thursday afternoon.



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According to **its press release**: “The CSB is an independent federal agency charged with investigating industrial chemical accidents...CSB investigations look into all aspects of chemical accidents, including physical causes such as equipment failure as well as inadequacies in regulations, industry standards, and safety management systems.”

ABC Chief Health and Medical Editor Dr. Richard Besser described to ABC News radio **the danger of exposure to ammonia**. “What you see with high level ammonia exposure is damage to your eyes, to your throat, to your nose, to your esophagus when you swallow,” he said.

“A blast that’s going in one direction, if you get a change in the wind, it can come to another neighborhood and be affected,” he added.

Resident Cheryl Marak who evacuated her home which she said was destroyed told CNN that before she left town it was **“getting hard to breathe.”**

The mayor of West, Texas Tommy Muska is urging those residents who have remained in the area **to stay indoors** due to any gas that might be in the air. He also expressed concern about winds which were forecast to change direction overnight.

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MORE ALLEGED GOSNELL

Marak says her dogs were killed and two of her homes were destroyed by the blast whose force knocked her over. She told Piers Morgan that her husband Marty is a volunteer firefighter and was busy fighting the blaze at the plant.

"I am begging, begging him to let me come in and get him ... he said he can't, he's got to stay with his guys," Marak said. "He won't leave. I would give anything if he would come home."

Here is Marak's interview with Piers Morgan of CNN:



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### THE-MONK

Posted on April 18, 2013 at 5:55am

Most chemical plants that produce compounds that are flammable and/or explosive have a problem with product dust.

Good cleaning maintenance is the key to safety.

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## SARGEKING

Posted on April 18, 2013 at 5:30am

The media moves pretty fast with a cover report. Or should I imply "cover-up"?

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## RIDEMODELS

Posted on April 18, 2013 at 6:00am

Usually fertilizer plants are not close to town, but when gas prices are high people have to move to where the work is.....I just have to wonder if there had been an Oil pipeline put in, if this had been very different.....cheaper fuel can change a country, but in all my years I have always heard fairy-tales of solar powered cars and airplanes.....I guess we can just always hope for the XL pipeline.



## THE-MONK

Posted on April 18, 2013 at 6:03am

Hi RIDEMODELS,

"Usually fertilizer plants are not close to town, but when gas prices are high people have to move to where the work is....."

You just summed up part of Agenda 21.

Everyone must live close enough to work to walk or ride a bicycle.

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**BREAKING NEWS**

Explosion at Texas fertilizer plant has killed between five and 15 people, according to Waco police.

# Explosion hits fertilizer plant north of Waco, Texas

By **Lateef Mungin**, CNN

updated 3:52 AM EDT, Thu April 18, 2013

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### STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Hospital is told to anticipate 100 injured, official says
- The explosion occurs at a fertilizer plant some 18 miles north of Waco, KWTX reports
- A man says he saw smoke then, a few minutes later, heard a massive explosion

*Are you there? Please send photos and videos to iReport, but please stay safe.*

**(CNN)** -- A massive explosion at a fertilizer plant in the small Texas town of West left at least two people dead, sent dozens more seeking medical attention and prompted a widescale evacuation in the community of 2,600 people.

Fire officials fear that the number of casualties could rise much higher.

The blast took place at the West Fertilizer Plant, about 18 miles north of Waco. It sent a massive fireball into the sky

And the danger may not be over.

Residents are being evacuated because officials are worried that another tank at the facility might explode.

State troopers in gas masks were scene rushing to the area shortly after the blast,

Shortly after the explosion, more than 60 patients streamed into

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**Blast at fertilizer plant near Waco** [Progress bar]

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Hillcrest Hospital in Waco, suffering from "blast injuries, orthopedic injuries (and) a lot of lacerations," said hospital CEO Glenn Robinson.

While some of the injuries are minor, others are "quite serious," he said.

At least six helicopters are going to fly out those who are injured, Robinson said. Others are being transported by ambulance, and some are getting to the hospital by car, he added.

Two other hospitals in the region were also assisting.

As many scrambled to assist the injured, another danger seemed to emerge Wednesday night.

"What we are hearing is that there is one fertilizer tank that is still intact at the plant, and there are evacuations in place to make sure everyone gets away from the area safely in case of another explosion," said Ben Stratmann, a spokesman for Texas State Sen. Brian Birdwell.

Photos of the explosion -- which reportedly happened around 7:50 p.m. (8:50 p.m. ET) -- showed a huge blaze and flames leaping over the roof of a structure and a plume of smoke rising high into the air.

The West Fertilizer Plant is just north of Waco. A school and a nursing home are among the buildings near the plant, [CNN affiliate KWTX reported](#).

Texas Gov. Rick Perry said he is aware of the explosion, a spokesman said, and was working to get resources into the area.

Tommy Alford, who works in a convenience store about three miles from the plant, told CNN that several volunteer firefighters were at the store when they spotted smoke. Alford said the firefighters headed toward the scene and then between five and 10 minutes later, he heard a massive explosion.

"It was massive; it was intense," Alford said.

Chrystal Anthony, a nearby resident, said she saw the flames engulf a nursing home and an apartment complex.

"It was an apartment complex that was devastated, the nursing home. The fire was close to a residential area," Anthony said.

"It was like a bomb went off," said Barry Murry, a resident who lives about a mile away from the plant. "There were emergency vehicles everywhere. It has been overwhelming."

West, Texas, is a community of about 2,800 people, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Sitting about 75 miles south of Dallas and 120 miles north of Austin, West is one of 22 incorporated communities in McLennan County.

Some firefighters at the scene of a fertilizer plant explosion in Texas were concerned Wednesday night about anhydrous ammonia.

#### [What is anhydrous ammonia?](#)

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, anhydrous ammonia is a pungent gas with suffocating fumes that is

**2 possible suspects in Boston bombing** ■■■■■

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used as a fertilizer.

When exposed to humans, it can cause serious problems.

CNN's Chandler Friedman, Carma Hassan, Ed Payne, Greg Botelho contributed to this report.

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Robert Dewey

Listening to the scanners, it sounds pretty bad. I'm hearing reports of "lots of firefighters down." CNN really needs to get on top of this.

Jose Ramos

Do you mind updating?  
There's no coverage on television, and CNN hasn't updated anything yet.  
Damn, this could turn real bad. Hope all the first responders the best.

Kristin Cunningham

I do not care for Fox News but they are covering it.

Jay Wise

I flip between Fox and CNN. Never MSNBC.

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