

Covanta Cited for Fire Safety Violations



The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration has issued citations against Covanta Energy for violating fire safety rules and for “maintaining” electrical equipment with duct tape and cardboard at the company’s garbage incinerator in Rochester, Massachusetts.

On April 2, 2009, the federal agency issued four citations against Covanta at its SEMASS plant, including for storing oxygen and acetylene cylinders side-by-side on a welding cart with no barrier between them. Fire safety regulations require employers to store oxygen and fuel gas cylinders at least 20 feet apart, or to separate them by a non-combustible barrier at least five feet high.

OSHA also cited Covanta for covering up openings in electrical equipment in a motor control center “by cardboard and/or duct tape so that the integrity of the enclosure was not maintained to contain a blast in the event of equipment failure.” OSHA also cited the company for an opening in a distribution panel breaker partially covered with duct tape, and for other instances of improper maintenance of electrical equipment.

This isn’t the first time Covanta has been cited for violating fire safety rules. On March 31, 2007, a catastrophic fire broke out at the SEMASS plant following an explosion in one of the facility’s garbage shredders. The fire burned for two days before being suppressed by fire departments called in from 36 surrounding communities.

On September 26, 2007, OSHA issued a citation against Covanta for failing to require employees fighting the fire inside one of the facility’s buildings to wear suitable protective clothing.

For more information concerning these events, please consider contacting Covanta at 973/882-7277 (ph.) or 973/882-7276 (fax).

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Campaign for Justice for Covanta Workers • www.cjcw.org**