

GAWDA ALERT

Liquid Nitrogen Incident Stresses Need for Bulk Tank Permits, Inspections, and Customer Safety Training

A recent [incident](#) in Augusta, Georgia involving a fatality resulting from a leak of liquid nitrogen at a customer facility is a reminder to GAWDA members to ensure that their bulk tanks are properly permitted and inspected and that their customers receive appropriate safety training in how to handle a leak or other incident.

The incident in question involved a leak of liquid nitrogen at a company that performs cryopreservation for cells and tissues. Occurring on a Sunday afternoon, the leak set off the facility's burglar alarm. According to published reports, a company employee and several deputy sheriffs responded to the alarm. They saw white vapor, and the employee entered the facility and tried to shut off the liquid nitrogen valve. She collapsed in the facility due to the lack of oxygen.

A deputy sheriff also entered the facility in an attempt to rescue the employee; he died from lack of oxygen. The local fire department, with proper protective gear, then responded to the scene, recovered the two persons and closed the valve. The injured employee was taken to the hospital and was in critical condition, but her condition is now improving. Three other deputies were also treated for inhalation injuries.

The State Fire Marshal has stated that the bulk tanks did not cause the incident, but officials are still investigating the actual cause of the leak.

GAWDA members are reminded, however, that bulk tanks at distributor and customer facilities must be permitted and receive periodic inspections. The specific requirements for permits and inspections vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction; check with your local agency to determine what regulations apply to your tanks.

For additional information on installation and operation of cryogenic tanks, GAWDA members may also access CGA publication P-18, *Standard for Bulk Inert Gas Systems*, and NFPA 55, *Compressed Gases and Cryogenic Fluids Code*. GAWDA members may access CGA publications for free if they sign up under the GAWDA/CGA subscription program.

GAWDA members are also reminded to discuss with your customers and local law enforcement the need for proper precautions in responding to any gas leak, including the use of personal protective equipment and breathing apparatus when necessary.

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