

April 3, 2009

## **DOE Cites Stanford University and Two Subcontractors for Worker Safety and Health Violations**

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today issued Preliminary Notices of Violation (PNOVs) to three contractors - Stanford University, Pacific Underground Construction, Inc., and Western Allied Mechanical, Inc. - for violations in September 2007 of the Department's worker safety and health regulations. Stanford University is the managing and operating contractor for DOE's SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory (SLAC), located in Menlo Park, California. At the time the violations occurred, Pacific Underground Construction was performing work at SLAC under subcontract to Stanford University, and Western Allied Mechanical was a subcontractor to Pacific Underground Construction.

The PNOVs cite multiple violations of 10 C.F.R. Part 851, Worker Safety and Health Program, resulting from a polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe explosion that occurred at SLAC on September 13, 2007. The violations for all three contractors are based on deficiencies in construction safety, fire protection, and adhering to safety procedures. The proposed civil penalties of \$210,000 for Stanford University, \$42,000 for Pacific Underground Construction, and \$56,000 for Western Allied Mechanical, are based on the significance of the violations. However, DOE elected not to impose the civil penalty on Stanford University because the University is a not-for-profit educational institution that receives no fee to operate SLAC under its contract with DOE.

The explosion occurred when a welder began cutting into a metal pipe to install a pressure gauge. The metal pipe was connected to PVC piping that had been installed the previous day using PVC primer and cement, and then sealed for pressure testing. The heat from the welder's acetylene torch ignited residual vapors from the primer and cement that were trapped inside the piping, causing the explosion. The force of the explosion, which occurred in an outdoor trench, threw shrapnel 60 feet outward. One piece was found more than 100 feet from the scene and another piece punctured an adjacent sheet metal wall. No workers were permanently injured, but one worker suffered temporary hearing loss and another worker was nearly knocked to the ground from the force of the explosion.

The Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003 authorizes the Energy Department to take regulatory actions against DOE contractors and subcontractors for violations of its worker safety and health requirements. DOE's Enforcement Program encourages Departmental contractors to identify and correct worker safety and health deficiencies at an early stage, before they contribute to or result in more serious events.

Additional details on this and other enforcement actions are available from the [Office of Enforcement](#).

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