



DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

News Release

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STATE CITES WAREHOUSE TENANTS WITH 59 SAFETY AND HEALTH VIOLATIONS

\$340,595 in Total Proposed Penalties Issued by HIOSH and US Department of Labor

HONOLULU—The Hawaii State Department of Labor and Industrial Relations' (DLIR) Hawaii Occupational Safety and Health Division (HIOSH) has issued 59 serious citations with proposed fines of up to \$89,265 to 10 tenants of Unicold Corporation's refrigerated food warehouse in Honolulu. Unicold and the tenants face \$340,595 in total proposed fines following joint inspections conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration and HIOSH.

The serious violations inspectors found include providing only one exit door, some of which were not side hinged, failure to select appropriate exit routes, train employees in the routes and hold periodic evacuation drills; neglecting to label routes that were not exits, obstructions to exit doors, and failure to train employees in the hazards of ammonia. A serious violation occurs when there is substantial probability that death or serious physical harm could result from a hazard about which the employer knew or should have known.

"The workers were exposed to grave hazards due to the employers' decision to obstruct emergency routes to enlarge the available storage space," said DLIR Director Dwight Takamine. "We are very fortunate that a tragic event did not occur, especially as the danger involved the potential of leaking ammonia, which could have exposed workers to asphyxiation, chemical and thermal burns, and other hazards. This could have been worse than the tragedy that occurred in

the Waikele Bunker explosion in April 2011.”

“We hope the employers will act swiftly to correct the serious issues identified through this collaborative effort between OSHA and HIOSH,” said Galen Lemke, Director of the Honolulu Federal OSHA Office. “This is a good example of how federal and state actions can help achieve our common goal of providing safe and healthy workplaces for Hawaii’s workforce.”

Other serious violations cited included hazards relating to improper use of forklifts as personnel lifts, forklifts in disrepair, expired training credentials for forklift operators, unguarded machinery, damaged storage systems, and inadequate electrical equipment.

The companies cited for one or more of the above violations include Ramar International Corporation, P&E Foods, Norpac Fisheries, Love’s Bakery, Lappert’s Inc., Kahuna Distribution LLC, Eskimo Candy Oahu, Eight Point Distributors, Choyce Products, and C&S Wholesale Grocers.

To ask questions, obtain compliance assistance, file a complaint, or report workplace hospitalizations, fatalities or situations posing imminent danger to workers, the public should call OSHA’s toll-free hotline at 800-321-OSHA (6742), the agency’s Honolulu office at 808-541-2680 or the HIOSH office at 808-586-9092.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. HIOSH’s role is to ensure these conditions for Hawaii’s working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education and assistance. For more information, visit <http://labor.hawaii.gov/hiosh/> or <http://www.osha.gov>.

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