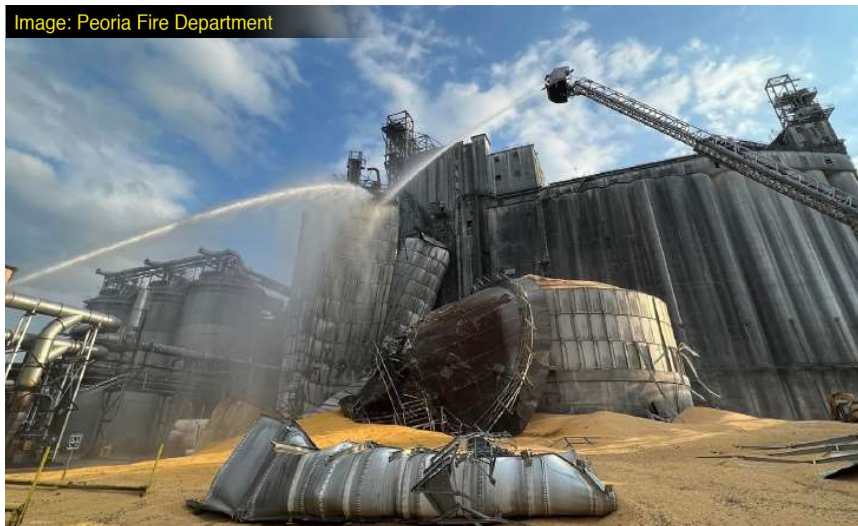


Image: Peoria Fire Department



Grain silo explosion injures two, causes \$2 million worth of damage in US

An explosion in a grain silo at an ethanol plant in Illinois, US injured two workers on May 11. According to fire department officials, the incident caused an estimated \$2 million (£1.6m) worth of damage to the facility which belongs to BioUrja Group.

The incident occurred at around 21:00 local time in the city of Peoria, central Illinois. The local fire department was called to the scene where they found

several heavily damaged, large grain bins on fire. Two employees at the BioUrja Renewables plant were treated by paramedics for smoke inhalation and were taken to hospital before being discharged later.

The US Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) attended the scene and opened an investigation, a spokesman for BioUrja told journalists. The spokesman said that while the cause

of the blast is unknown, the incident happened after one of the grain silos imploded and caused a fire which then resulted in a series of further explosions.

The facility was shut down following the incident and will remain closed until OSHA and other local officials have finished their investigation. The fire department said that while it was able to extinguish an initial fire, it was unable to prevent one of the grain silos from collapsing. Three more silos suffered partial collapse and are leaning over.

As of May 17, firefighters continued to monitor a smouldering fire at the scene and said that the continued heat had weakened the remaining structures and could cause further explosions. The Peoria fire department said that an early estimation of the damage caused by the explosion is around \$2 million, however the damage had been contained to the grain silos themselves and a nearby storage area at the site. The distillation part of the facility was unaffected, fire officials added.

BioUrja, an energy and agricultural commodity trading and supply company, purchased the Peoria facility from grain merchant Archer Daniels Midland Co (ADM) in 2021. The plant has a capacity to produce around 135 million gallons of ethanol a year. ■



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Representative image: Shutterstock



Chemical plant blast kills six, injures five in Slovenia

An explosion at a chemical plant in southeastern Slovenia killed six people and injured five others on May 12. The incident happened at a plant belonging to chemical producer Melamin in the town of Kocevje.

The incident happened at around 08:30 local time in an area of the plant where raw materials are delivered. The Melamin plant

produces chemicals used for the production of paper and rubber. Firefighters arrived at the scene and extinguished a fire while police and army personnel helped secure the area.

The blast is reported to have been contained to the Melamin site itself and did not impact the local area. Slovenia's environmental agency said that no contamination had occurred.

According to Slovenia's state news agency, STA, police found the bodies of five people who had initially been missing after the explosion. A sixth person died of their injuries in hospital. Five others were taken to hospital to receive treatment, including one who was in a serious condition.

Melamin's General Manager Srecko Stefanic told local media that an investigation was underway to determine the exact cause of the blast, however he said it was most likely a result of human error. According to local news, the human error occurred during the pumping of a chemical used in the production of resin called epichlorohydrin.

The company has said that the incident is estimated to have caused around €36 million (£30.2m) in damage. Melamin will likely seek support from the European Union to help fund reconstruction of the plant. Reconstruction of the plant is expected to begin in the next few months and could take up to 18 months to complete.

According to its website, Melamin operates in the field of melamine chemistry, supplying resins for the paper, construction, wood, rubber, and the lacquer industries. ■

Biodiesel plant explosion kills two, injures 19 in Spain

An explosion at a biodiesel plant in Spain's northeastern region of La Rioja killed two people and injured 19 others on May 26. The incident happened at a plant operated by biodiesel producer Iniciativas Bioenergeticas.

The explosion happened at around 13:00 local time in the municipality of Calahorra. Emergency services were called to the scene and battled a fire that had erupted. Footage taken at the scene shows a large plume of black smoke rising from the plant. Firefighters were able to bring the blaze under control within 90 minutes of arriving, the local fire department said.

According to Spanish daily newspaper *El Pais*, a team of Spanish Civil Guard police officers had been conducting

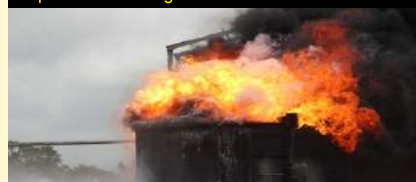
training operations in the local area when the explosion occurred. The police officers were able to help first responders gain access to the plant as soon as they arrived, aiding the rescue efforts.

The Calahorra City Council told locals to leave the local area due to the risk of further explosions. An exclusion zone of 1km was set up so that emergency services could attend the scene and prevent the fire from spreading to nearby industrial buildings.

A local nature reserve was evacuated as a precaution with 250 school children, who had been visiting the park on a school trip, being taken away on a bus while first responders closed off the area.

The cause of the explosion is unknown.

Representative image: Shutterstock



Iniciativas Bioenergeticas has not commented on the incident. The two people who died were aged 30 and 41 and are believed to have been employees at the plant.

A local ecological group, Ecologistas en Acción, told local news sites that the Iniciativas Bioenergeticas facility has received several complaints in recent years relating to the management of the facility. It is unknown whether these are related to safety incidents or the May 26 explosion. ■