



Trade Release

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Occupational Safety and Health Administration
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OSHA will hold expert forum to identify regulatory options for protecting workers from combustible dust hazards

WASHINGTON – Since 1980, nearly 150 workers have been killed and more than 850 injured in combustible dust explosions. To explore methods for preventing such explosions, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration invited outside experts to participate in a Combustible Dust Expert Forum May 13, 2011. OSHA will gather experts' views on possible regulatory options for addressing combustible dust hazards.

Discussions will include identifying regulatory options that can minimize the costs to small- and medium-sized businesses of reducing or preventing combustible dust hazards, while protecting workers from these hazards. Representatives from various industries, academia, research groups, insurance-underwriter organizations, labor, and government will comprise expert representation.

OSHA's earlier efforts to address combustible dust hazards included a National Emphasis Program in 2007 that targeted inspection efforts on facilities that create or handle combustible dusts. Results from these inspections indicated that facilities had unusually high numbers of general duty clause violations, indicating a strong need for a combustible dust standard. This effort was followed by publication of an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in 2009, from which the agency received more than 100 comments. Additionally, OSHA held six stakeholders meetings and conducted a Web chat on combustible dust to expand the opportunity for public and stakeholder participation. The agency recognizes the importance of considering options for addressing combustible dust hazards, particularly as they may affect small facilities, in preparation for convening a Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act panel.

Combustible dusts include fine particles, fibers, chips, chunks or flakes that, under certain conditions, can cause a fire or explosion when suspended in air. Types of dusts include metal (for example, aluminum and magnesium), wood, plastic, rubber, coal, flour, sugar and paper, among others. Visit OSHA's Safety and Health Topics page on [Combustible Dust](http://www.osha.gov/dsg/combustibledust/index.html) (<http://www.osha.gov/dsg/combustibledust/index.html>) to learn more about this dangerous hazard.

The forum will be held at 9 a.m. at the Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. There will be limited space available for non-participating observers, so OSHA asks that only one representative from interested organizations register as an observer. To register as a non-participating observer, contact Bill Hamilton at 202-693-2077 by May 6, 2011. A summary of the forum will be available soon after the meeting on OSHA's [Combustible Dust](http://www.osha.gov/dsg/combustibledust/index.html) (<http://www.osha.gov/dsg/combustibledust/index.html>) Web page.

General inquiries should be directed to Mat Chibbaro, Office of Safety Systems, at 202-693-2382. Media inquiries should be directed to Earl Hicks, Office of Communications, at 202-693-1999.

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

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