



Compliance and Enforcement Division

INCIDENT REPORT

**Columbus Salame Company
493 Forbes Road
South San Francisco
August 28, 2009**

On August 28, 2009, Columbus Salame Company, located at 493 Forbes in South San Francisco, released gaseous ammonia resulting in a shelter in place for the industrial area near the facility. Ammonia is used in the facility's refrigeration system. Columbus Salame Company on Forbes Road is used to slice and package meat products and does not manufacture food products.

Initial investigation indicated that at approximately 5:30 am, plant personnel discovered a valve malfunction that resulted in ammonia leaking from the refrigeration system. The system was shut down immediately. The San Mateo County Environmental Health and fire departments arrived on scene and ordered a shelter in place in the immediate area around the facility. Several streets in the area were closed for public safety as well. Initial ammonia concentration levels outside the facility, measured by emergency response personnel, ranged from 10 to 26 parts per million.

Ammonia gas is colorless and has a pungent, penetrating odor. Ammonia gas is very irritating to the eyes, nose, and respiratory system, which makes it easy to detect at low concentrations in the air. A person can detect the odor of ammonia in the 2 to 25 parts per million concentration range. The maximum allowable concentration over a ten-hour period (40-hours week) is 25 parts per million¹. Concentrations of ammonia greater than 300 parts per million are an immediate danger to life and health². There are no ambient air quality standards for ammonia.

The shelter in place was lifted approximately 9:30 am.

UPDATE: - March 28, 2010

On January 12, 2010, District staff issued Notice of Violation (NOV) #A48781 to Columbus Salame Company for violation of Regulation 1, Section 301: Public Nuisance.

¹ National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) – Time Weighted Average (TWA) Reference Exposure Limit

² OSHA Permissible Exposure Limit (PEL) General Industry Air Contaminants Standard