

## **Probe after worker burned by ammonia**

23 March 2007, by Laurence Cawley, [www.eadt.co.uk](http://www.eadt.co.uk)

An investigation is under way after a worker suffered facial burns during an ammonia leak at a major Suffolk firm.

An engineer carrying out maintenance work at the Direct Table Foods factory at Little Saxham, near Bury St Edmunds, suffered the injury when ammonia leaked from the refrigeration system just before 12.45pm yesterday.

The 27-year-old man suffered facial burns and breathing problems caused by the ammonia - a colourless toxic gas with a pungent odour - and was taken to West Suffolk Hospital by ambulance.

A chemical spillage unit from Haverhill attended the incident, with fire crews from Bury St Edmunds and Newmarket.

The Health and Safety Executive last night confirmed enquiries into the cause of the leak were under way.

Kate Telling, personal assistant to the directors of the firm, said: "Visiting contractors were providing routine replacement of leaking gasket. The system was fully closed down; it is suspected there was a small amount of residual ammonia within the pipe work.

"On removal of the valve, a small amount of ammonia vapour struck one of the engineers on the arm and face. Emergency services were called and the engineer was taken to West Suffolk Hospital where treatment is ongoing."

She said treatment was ongoing at the hospital and that the engineer's employers were arranging for his family to visit him. The second engineer involved in the incident was unharmed. The site was not evacuated after the incident.

A spokeswoman for Suffolk Fire Service said they were called to the scene of the spill at 12.44pm after getting reports of an ammonia leak from the factory's refrigeration system. The incident was under control by 2pm, the spokeswoman said.

A spokesman for the ambulance service said: "We took just one man, a 27-year-old to West Suffolk Hospital with burns to his face. He was also suffering irritation and breathing problems."

The firm, which employs 230 people and supplies a number of major supermarkets, has only been in its £20million Saxham Business Park site for 11 months.

The move to Saxham came after its former home in Lamdin Road, Bury, was destroyed by fire in November 2004.

Established by the Stanton family in the 1950s, the business started trading from Smithfield meat market in central London.

Initially established as the Direct Table Produce Company Limited, the firm specialised in selling poultry, sausages and beef through their shop and van sales.

## **Gas leak probe as 200 are evacuated**

23 March 2007, by Dave Appleton, [www.rochdaleobserver.co.uk](http://www.rochdaleobserver.co.uk)

TWENTY-six people were taken to hospital after a gas leak at an industrial estate.

Firefighters and other emergency crews were called out on Wednesday morning after reports of ammonia gas escaping into the air.

The casualties, who all worked at the 3663 refrigeration plant at the Salmon Field business park in Royton, were taken to Royal Oldham Hospital.

Police started to evacuate nearby homes but stopped after the leak was brought under control.

About 200 workers had already been moved out of the premises, which supplies frozen food products to various sites across the North West.

Fire crews, some wearing gas-tight suits, were called to the scene at 7.30am after an ammonia cloud began to form around the factory.

One man felt 'queasy' after the leak and 25 others were later taken to hospital for observation.

A spokesman for Pennine Hospitals, which runs Oldham Royal, said: "Several people were treated for gas inhalation and others were kept in for observation."

A spokesman for Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service said: "There was a very small leak of ammonia, which is believed to have shut off on its own."

"The health and safety executive has started an investigation and cordoned off the area."

"We sent about 20 firefighters, but withdrew when it became evident the leak had ceased."

"One male worker was most seriously affected and apparently was feeling queasy."

"But consequently 25 others also went to hospital for check-ups."

A spokesman for 3663 said: "An ammonia leak was reported and the site was evacuated."

"The safety and well-being of our staff remains paramount and a full investigation is currently underway."

A worker at the plant said there had been less serious problems with gas leaks before.

He added: "This kind of thing has happened before but never this bad."

"The plant has been evacuated before but no one has ever had to go to hospital."