

# Chemical plant fined after major gas leak

Ineos Chemicals Grangemouth Limited has been fined after ethylene, a flammable gas, was released from a cracked pipe at the KF Ethylene Plant.

Falkirk Sheriff Court heard that on 2 May 2017 approximately 17 tonnes of ethylene was released from the pipe. This leak precipitated the formation of a flammable gas cloud of around 65,000m<sup>3</sup>. The gas cloud was seen to move through a congested area of the plant reaching ground level.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) identified that the immediate cause of an unplanned shutdown on the compressor was due to a 'non-routine' maintenance activity related to the changeover of a redundant electronic control card in the compressor anti-surge system. The line should have been designed for all potential operating conditions and should not have failed as a result of the rapid opening of the valve and the sudden inrush of hot gas.

Ineos Chemicals Grangemouth Limited, of Chapel Lane, Lyndhurst, Hampshire pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 5(1) of the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 2015 and section 33(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. They were fined £400,000.

Speaking after the hearing HSE inspector Mac Young said: "While there were no injuries as a result of this incident and it was brought under control relatively quickly, the level of fine reflects the seriousness of what happened. It is important that operators of high hazard sites remain vigilant and control the risks that arise as a result of their processes to prevent major incidents."

Head of the Health and Safety Investigation Unit of COPFS Alistair Duncan said: "Hopefully this prosecution and the sentence will remind other duty holders that failure to fulfil their obligations can have serious consequences and that they will be held to account for their failings."

## **Notes to Editors:**

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. [hse.gov.uk](http://hse.gov.uk)
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: [legislation.gov.uk/](http://legislation.gov.uk/)
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

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