

## N E W S   R E L E A S E

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### **Cal/OSHA Cites Two Employers for Serious Meat-Grinder Accident**

**San Luis Obispo**—Cal/OSHA has cited Vitco Meats and temporary employment agency Volt Workforce Solutions a combined \$74,500 following a nearly fatal accident at a San Luis Obispo meat processing plant that left a worker with a crushed right hand, a broken arm, and nerve damage. Neither company had trained the employee to safely operate or clean the industrial meat grinder he was operating.

“When companies hire temporary employees they do not sign away their responsibilities to protect workers from industrial accidents,” said Cal/OSHA Chief Juliann Sum. “Both temporary employment agencies and host employers are required to ensure workers are trained and understand safety procedures.”

On July 16, 2015, the worker was attempting to remove ground beef stuck inside the hopper of a meat mixer, which moves beef into the grinder. When he reached into the hopper, the power was still live. Paddles that move the beef rotated twice, causing severe injuries to the employee. Had the paddles rotated a third time, the accident could have been fatal.

Cal/OSHA’s investigation found that Vitco Meats did not require employees to disengage the power on industrial equipment prior to cleaning. Additionally, the company lacked specific procedures for powering down the meat grinder, which also lacked a required cover with interlock. Cal/OSHA issued a total of nine citations to Vitco Meats with proposed penalties of \$63,900.

Cal/OSHA also issued a serious citation to Volt Workforce Solutions for failing to ensure that Vitco Meats had an injury and illness prevention program or safety training for meat grinders. A serious violation is cited when there is a realistic possibility that death or serious harm could result from the actual hazardous condition. The company was also issued one regulatory and two general citations for proposed penalties of \$10,600.

Workers can be electrocuted or suffer permanent disfigurement due to inadvertent activation of a machine while it is being maintained, repaired or adjusted. Failure to develop and follow lockout / tagout procedures before working on machinery is one of

the major causes of serious injury and death in California. Lockout / tagout procedures refer to the use of devices to ensure equipment cannot be operated until the devices are removed. Use of these devices, and developing procedures to ensure their use, are required by the [California Code of Regulations](#). Employers can find sample lockout / tagout methods and procedures on the [DIR website](#).

Cal/OSHA, officially known as the Division of Occupational Safety and Health, is a division of DIR. Cal/OSHA helps protect workers from health and safety hazards on the job in almost every workplace in California. [Cal/OSHA's Consultation Services Branch](#) provides free and voluntary assistance to employers and employee organizations to improve their health and safety programs. Employers should call (800) 963-9424 for assistance from Cal/OSHA Consultation Services.

Employees with work-related questions or complaints may contact DIR's Call Center in English or Spanish at 844-LABOR-DIR (844-522-6734). The California Workers' Information line at 866-924-9757 provides recorded information in English and Spanish on a variety of work-related topics. Complaints can also be filed confidentially with [Cal/OSHA district offices](#).

Members of the press may contact Julia Bernstein or Peter Melton at (510) 286-1161, and are encouraged to [subscribe to get email alerts](#) on DIR's press releases or other departmental updates.

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The [California Department of Industrial Relations](#), established in 1927, protects and improves the health, safety, and economic well-being of over 18 million wage earners, and helps their employers comply with state labor laws. DIR is housed within the [Labor & Workforce Development Agency](#). For general inquiries, contact DIR's Communications Call Center at 844-LABOR-DIR (844-522-6734) for help in locating the appropriate [division or program](#) in our department.