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US Department of Labor's OSHA cites Houston manufacturing company for hiding work-related injuries and illnesses; fines exceed \$1.2 million

HOUSTON – The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration has issued Goodman Manufacturing Co. LP 83 willful citations for failing to record and improperly recording work-related injuries and illnesses at the company's Houston air conditioning cooling facility. Proposed penalties total \$1,215,000.

"Accurate workplace injury and illness records are vital tools for identifying hazards and protecting workers' health and safety," said Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis. "Workers and employers need this information to recognize patterns of injuries and illnesses, and prevent future hazards."

OSHA's Houston North Area Office began its investigation March 2 in response to a complaint alleging that Goodman Manufacturing was not properly recording workplace injuries and illnesses in violation of OSHA's regulations. The investigation determined that Goodman had either not recorded or failed to properly record the nature and/or duration of 72 percent of employee injuries and illnesses from January 2008 to March 15, 2010, on its log.

Although Goodman was extremely knowledgeable about OSHA recordkeeping requirements, it made many unsupportable decisions that resulted in the deficiencies found by the agency. With regard to the injuries and illnesses improperly recorded, important information reflecting severity, such as the time away from work, was grossly incorrect.

"OSHA takes these violations extremely seriously," said Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA Dr. David Michaels. "OSHA needs accurate data to effectively target its inspections and resources, and to measure the impact of OSHA's actions on workplace safety. Employers and workers need to understand how important accurate data are to workplace safety and health."

OSHA defines a willful violation as one committed with plain indifference to or intentional disregard for OSHA's requirements or employee safety and health.

The company has 15 business days from receipt of the citations to comply, request an informal conference with OSHA's area director in Houston, or contest the citations and penalties before the independent Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission. Employers and employees with questions about workplace safety and health standards can call OSHA's Houston North Area Office at 281-591-2438 or its Houston South Area Office at 281-286-0583. To report workplace accidents, fatalities or situations posing imminent danger to workers, call OSHA's toll-free hotline at 800-321-6742.

Apart from this particular investigation, OSHA has implemented a National Emphasis Program on Recordkeeping to assess the accuracy of injury and illness recorded by employers.

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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