

ELECTRICAL STORM IGNITES HYDROGEN GAS AT KOORAGANG ISLAND

9 January 2012

On the evening of Sunday 8 January 2012, hydrogen gas venting from a stack at Orica's Kooragang Island Ammonia Plant was ignited by an electrical storm. The venting of hydrogen gas is part of the normal plant start-up process and its ignition has produced a flare from the stack visible to local residents. There is no risk to the local community, the environment or the plant.

Site Manager, Sean Winstone, said, "While it is not part of Orica's normal start-up procedures, the ignition of hydrogen from a vent stack is not a unique event. It has happened in the past both at Orica and at other plants and we have procedures in place to manage it.

"Hydrogen, a colourless, odourless, non-toxic gas which produces water when it burns, is produced by the plant and is discharged from vent stacks during the restart process. Some plants will deliberately ignite it during the restart process. At Orica we do not deliberately light the gas as part of our standard procedures but the flare poses no risk to the community or to the plant," he said.

NSW Fire and Rescue attended the plant shortly after the ignition of the gas and were satisfied that it posed no risk. The NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) was notified approximately half an hour after the ignition and NSW Workcover has attended the site.

"As the flare poses no risk, we have continued with the restart of the Ammonia Plant which has been progressing well. Over the weekend, we successfully restarted the High Temperature Shift Catalyst Vessel which is the section of the plant which was the source of an emission of hexavalent chromium on 8 August last year. This was done without incident and means that there is now no hexavalent chromium remaining in the plant," Mr Winstone said.

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