

'Losing one of our employees was the terrible part of this.'

— E.L. Byington
co-owner of Necessary Oil Co.

By ANNE GRUNDON

Bristol Herald Courier

Necessary Oil Co. has been issued a "serious" citation and fined \$7,000 by the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development in connection with a July explosion that killed an employee of the Bristol oil recycling center.

According to a notice issued by the department's Division of Occupational Safety and Health, the company violated state safety stand-

Bristol company's co-owner says steps already being taken to make plant safer

ards by failing to "furnish employment and a place of employment which was free from recognized hazards that were causing or likely to cause death or serious physical harm."

The violation was classified as "se-

rious" by the department because there was a serious likelihood that a severe injury would occur within the environment provided by the employer, explained Steve Hawkins, assistant administrator of the division.

Other categories for citations are

non-serious, willful and repeat. Hawkins said. He added that \$7,000 is the maximum fine for a serious citation.

Tennessee OSHA investigators were called to the Georgia Avenue plant following the July 23 incident

that badly burned 61-year-old employee Allen Eaton.

Eaton was transported to Bristol Regional Medical Center and then to a North Carolina burn center, where he died the following day.

Inspectors visited the plant two days later and ultimately found that Eaton "was exposed to the physical hazards of explosion and fire when a gate valve on a 3-inch line between

See **NECESSARY**, Page 10A

NECESSARY

From Page 1A

the settling tank and the oil separator ruptured allowing heated waste oil under pressure to escape from the valve."

In addition to assessing the \$7,000 fine, OSHA officials have ordered Necessary Oil to correct the hazardous conditions by replacing the faulty equipment and implementing a periodic inspection process to detect unsafe equipment.

E.L. Byington, co-owner of the company, said Monday that he does not plan to appeal the state ruling and already has taken

steps to make the plant safer.

"We bought the company as it was in '95 and some of the equipment was quite aged — probably 15 to 20 years old," he said, adding that the fire occurred in areas where equipment had not been updated in recent years.

"We've got practically all of it removed now and it's been taken to a scrap metal place," he added. "We're replacing it with new motors and new pumps and new piping and that sort of thing."

Until the equipment has been replaced, Byington said, the company will continue to collect used oil but will not refine it for resale. Surplus oil that had been refined

and placed in storage is being sold to customers now, but supplies are limited, he said.

"If we run out, we're going to buy oil to keep our customers satisfied until we can get back up," he said. "We're plugging away trying to keep enough supply to keep them as our customers instead of letting them go somewhere else."

Byington said the new equipment should be in place within six weeks so that the company can resume normal operations.

"Losing one of our employees was the terrible part of this," Byington said. "We're still dealing with that trauma because it's really just crushed us all."