Initial Investigative Facts in the West Fertilizer Explosion

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Abstract

On April 17, 2013, an explosion occurred at the West Fertilizer Company storage and distribution facility in West, Texas. The explosion at West Fertilizer resulted from an intense fire in the seed and storage area of the facility that led to the detonation of approximately 20-30 tons of ammonium nitrate stored inside a wooden receiving bin. The explosion occurred while emergency services personnel were responding to a fire at the facility and at least fifteen people were killed, more than 200 were injured, and numerous buildings were damaged or destroyed. The cause of the initial fire is still ongoing. This paper presents the initial evidence of our investigation into the cause and origin of the explosion event. In addition, the paper will also outline the current local, state and federal regulations regarding the storage and use of reactive chemicals such as ammonium nitrate.