



United Support & Memorial For Workplace Fatalities

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Because going to work shouldn't be a grave mistake!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Response to OSHA Citations against Haasbach, LLC in Death of Two Young Workers

After a six month investigation, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued 12 willful and 12 serious violations against Haasbach, LLC, the employer of Wyatt Whitebread, 14 and Alex Pacas, 19, who were buried alive in a grain silo. OSHA also proposed \$550,000 in penalties. The young men were working on July 28, 2010 at Haasbach's Mt. Carroll, IL site, along with two other young workers who escaped death. Among the numerous egregious violations, OSHA found the company required the workers to manually move corn to flow points while walking on moving corn in the storage bin, a willful violation of safety standards.

"I find it sickening the farmers involved in this LLC have received millions of dollars in government farm subsidies with our tax dollars but they couldn't ensure a safe work environment or follow child labor laws," said Catherine Rylatt, Alex Pacas' aunt. "Were not the lives of these young people worth the \$200 or \$300 cost of a safety harness? I feel like in paying my taxes – I helped kill my nephew and Wyatt – as did all taxpayers.

The citations issued to Haasbach included failure to assess hazards that would require the use of personal protective equipment, failure to provide training, failure to have procedures to deenergize equipment, and failure to have an emergency action plan and equipment for rescue. "There is no excuse for the deaths of these young men," said Tammy Miser, Executive Director of United Support and Memorial for Workplace Fatalities. "Handling grain is their business. They should be well aware of safety regulations, many of which have been around for over 20 years."

Ms. Rylatt's and her family's initial reaction to the OSHA citations and penalties was dismay. "If OSHA was intending to send a strong message to employers about their responsibility toward keeping worker's safe, or indeed, a message to the grain industry itself - this dollar amount falls far short. Knowing the maximum fine for a willful violation is \$70,000 and for a serious \$7,000, we are again left wondering - why were the lives of Alex and Wyatt, the trauma suffered by Will and Chris, not worth the maximum? Lastly, we are left wondering if OSHA used its full enforcement powers to bring criminal charges against this company. For if not, the message is clear - it's okay to kill people as long as you are the employer and it happens at work."

USMWF is a not-for-profit organization offering support, guidance, resources, and advocacy to empower persons affected by preventable work related deaths or serious injuries; works with other organizations, government agencies, and businesses; acts as a catalyst for positive change in the workplace to ensure safe and healthy working conditions for all.

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