

Outgoing Conversation Record

Date November 26, 2012
Time 2:30pm

Licensee Dow Corning, Midland Plant
License No. 21-08362-12
Docket 030-10509

Participants Ryan Craffey, DNMS 630-829-9655
Tray Dillon, Dow Corning 989-496-4000 (main line)

Subject: EN 48535 – Process Instrument Shutter Failure

The NRC received notification from Dow Corning of a fixed gauge shutter failure on November 26, 2012. This was the licensee's fourth notification of a shutter failure since May of 2011. The staff called the RSO of Dow Corning, David Tray Dillon, to ask if he had considered the extent of condition of these shutter failures.

David indicated that the gauge in question was one of 11 Ohmart Vega SH-F1's at the facility. This one in particular had failed previously in May 2011 (EN #46913). Another SH-F1 had also failed twice, in May 2012 (EN #47958) and again in September 2012 (EN #48335). All 11 of these gauges had been manufactured between 2001 and 2008. In each instance, it was discovered that an o-ring in the gauge housing had significantly degraded, allowing for the intrusion of moisture and buildup of enough rust to inhibit movement of the shutter mechanism.

The RSO also indicated that another licensee, Hemlock Semiconductor Corporation (030-37611), has had similar problems with SH-FX series gauges recently (see EN #46940 and #48412). In a conversation with a distributor of Ohmart Vega gauges – Dr. Mike Hinsley of RSO Services, Carbon Hill, AL – the RSO was told that the manufacturer was aware of widespread problems with these particular o-rings. However, it does not appear that Dow Corning was made aware of the issue, even after the previous three failures.

A review of the NRC's Part 21 report listings yielded nothing from Ohmart, nor did an ADAMS search turn up any relevant documents.

The RSO stated that he planned to have another vendor (Berthold) remove both of the SH-F1 gauges which had failed from service. He expressed a desire to remove all of the SH-F1 gauges from service and replace them with other models in the future.

David also indicated that he would be out of the office for the remainder of the year starting on December 13th.

The licensee called back the next morning – November 27, around 9:00 am – to inform the staff that a representative of Berthold had arrived on-site and was preparing to remove four Ohmart SH-F1 gauges from service, including the gauge whose shutter had failed in September 2012. The gauge whose shutter had failed yesterday is not among the four to be removed today, because it is required for operation of the process line to which it is attached.