



MAYOR GINA-LOUISE SCIARRA

City of Northampton

Office of the Mayor

210 Main Street Room 12

Northampton, MA 01060-3199

(413) 587-1249 Fax: (413) 587-1275

mayor@northamptonma.gov

March 31, 2022

Joint Statement on BI-QEM Chemical Spill

NORTHAMPTON, MA - On Tuesday, March 29, 2022, the Mayor's Office asked Northampton Fire/Rescue to respond to a resident's report of a chemical spill at Bi-QEM, a factory located at 238 Nonotuck Street.

On arrival, the city found a small amount of white frozen liquid material on the ground and a 55-gallon drum approximately one-quarter full containing the same product. The spill was located at the unloading station by the plant's large formaldehyde tank outside an associated containment pit in which the tank rests. Upon further investigation, Fire/Rescue officials found approximately 100 gallons of this material in a frozen state inside the containment pit. It was determined that there was no active leak at the tank or any off-gassing of the spilled material.

The plant manager on-site stated that there had been a formaldehyde leak the previous day, Monday, March 28, 2022, at approximately 2:38 PM while their vendor was offloading product into the formaldehyde tank. Bi-QEM's operations manager reported to Northampton Fire/Rescue that he believed the tank had been overfilled.

Fire/Rescue requested that MassDEP respond to the scene. On arrival, they advised the plant manager that this was a reportable quantity spill and immediate notification was required. Bi-QEM hired a contractor to clean the site up, and engaged their Licensed Site Safety Professional to supervise the clean-up. Until a required investigation is complete, Bi-QEM is forbidden from filling the formaldehyde tank any further.

Mayor Sciarra and Councilor Jarrett are calling for a meeting with Bi-QEM's leadership to discuss this and other incidents, and how to bring this location into full compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The Mayor and city regulatory bodies, Councilor Jarrett, Senator Comerford, Representative Sabadosa, the Federal Environment Protection Agency, and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection have been working together closely for the past several months to identify and work to correct a host of issues at the factory.

"The health and safety of our residents is our highest priority," said Mayor Sciarra, "Nothing short of full compliance with all environmental laws and regulations will be acceptable to the City of Northampton."

"This violation, and Bi-QEM's past record are deeply concerning to me and I will be working to address this in every way I can," said Councilor Jarrett.

BI-QEM, previously known as Chemiplastica, produces thermosetting resins and compounds. They operate in a factory that has been in operation in Florence since the late 1800s.

For more information, please contact the Mayor's Office at mayor@northamptonma.gov, or Councilor Jarrett at ajarrett@northamptonma.gov.