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Feds fine Tesla nearly $50K after worker’s death at Austin gigafactory

Tesla is facing nearly $50,000 in federal fines for alleged safety lapses after a worker died at the Austin gigafactory last year.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the federal agency that enforces workplace safety standards, found that Tesla did not provide proper protective equipment and allowed employees to work too closely to electric power circuits without warning.

The agency issued three citations of $16,550 each, labeling them “serious,” on Jan. 31. Reached for comment via email, an OSHA spokesman said the employer has contested the violations in this case.

U.S. Rep. Greg Casar said the fines resulted from OSHA’s investigation into the death of Victor Joe Gomez Sr., an electrician who died at the Tesla manufacturing plant on Aug. 1. In a lawsuit they filed against the company, Gomez’s family says he was electrocuted while inspecting panels that should have been powered off.

After Reuters first reported last month that Tesla would be cited for Gomez’s death, Casar demanded the federal government release more details about the investigation and penalties. The details made public now provide some additional information about alleged safety problems at the massive factory on the east side of the Texas capital city.

“On or about August 1, 2024, and at times prior thereto, an employee was working in close proximity to energized parts without wearing appropriate personal protective equipment,” the OSHA fines read.

Another fine added: “Quality control employees were exposed to electrical hazards while performing tests and inspections on newly installed electrical equipment without prior hazard analysis, warning signs, and communication of safe work procedures.”

The U.S. Department of Labor fined Tesla nearly $7,000 last year for exposing its gigafactory workers to chemicals.

Tesla’s lawyer in the negligence lawsuit did not respond to a request for comment about the fines or how they might affect the case.

Source: https://www.kut.org