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Indictment says Corona trucking firm owner 'recklessly' caused fatal welding job explosion



Emergency personnel respond to an explosion that happened at a trucking firm in Corona that killed one worker and left another injured on Tuesday, May 6, 2014.

By **RICHARD K. DE ATLEY** |

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A Corona man whose trucking company was the site of a [fatal 2014 gasoline tanker welding explosion](#) has been named in a indictment that claims he operated outside federal regulations, created a shell company to continue illegally running fuel-hauling rigs after the welder's death and lied about his role in the fatal work order.

Carl Bradley Johansson, 59, was indicted late Wednesday along with Enrique "Henry" Garcia, 43, of Pomona and Donald Cameron Spicer, 66, of Fullerton. Also named in the indictment is National Distribution Services, which operated from about 2009 through 2015, and its successor Wholesale Distribution, which does business as Quality Services.

Garcia was Johansson's shop manager and supervised the welders, and Spicer was the safety manager at Johansson's companies, the indictment said.

An affidavit filed with the case said the tank had not been purged or cleaned of vapors before the welding repair work began. [Samuel Enciso, 51, of Santa Fe Springs](#), was killed in the explosion.

A surviving second worker from the [May 6, 2014 explosion](#) told investigators the tank smelled strongly of fumes and he told Garcia and another man that he feared working on it, but was told, "Well, the boss wants it right away." The worker said he believed he would have been sent home without pay if he didn't do the job, the affidavit said.

The four-count indictment and the affidavit claims Johansson, who has used several aliases, didn't have at National Distribution Services the U.S. Department of Transportation required "R" stamp approval for repairing pressure vessels, including hazardous material tanks, when the fatal blast took place.

Johansson, Garcia and Spicer are charged with "willfully and recklessly" causing the two workers to make repairs on the tank at National when the operation didn't have the necessary regulatory approval.

"Mr. Johansson absolutely denies that he is responsible for the horrible accident that occurred in this case and that he could have done anything to prevent it," Johansson's attorney, Mark Werksman, said Thursday in a telephone message.

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Johansson knew the "R" approval was needed because he had made a plea agreement to a 1999 federal indictment stemming from a 1993 welder explosion death at a company that Johansson had owned in Montebello which also didn't have the approval stamp, according to the affidavit.

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Johansson was sentenced to 15 months in federal prison in that case.

The current indictment charges all the defendants conspired to operate hazardous material tank trucking without federal regulatory approval at the Corona business, then violated an of out-of-service order issued after the fatal accident.

That order prohibited National Distribution Services from operating about 37 cargo tanks to haul gasoline or ethanol.

When National's effort to overturn the order failed, the defendants created Wholesale Distribution as a shell company to continue the trucking operation and lied to regulators when they denied it was a reincarnation of National, the document said.

Johansson is also accused of lying to investigators by claiming he had no knowledge of the planned repair on the tank before the deadly explosion, including telling investigators he did not even know it was on National's property.

An investigator said in the affidavit that a time-stamped security video from National showed Johansson on May 5, 2014 standing in front of the tanker and talking to Garcia. While there is no audio on the recording, Garcia can be seen pointing to the tanker as he talked to Johansson, including pointing to the spot on the tanker where the welding would be done the next day, the document said.

On the day of the explosion, the indictment said, Johansson used a different name in talking to investigators, said he was a customer service representative for another business, and that the dead and injured employees worked for a different company than National.

"We're still in the process of evaluating the charges," said Werksman, Johansson's attorney. "Mr. Johansson looks forward to the opportunity to defend himself in court against these accusations and of exonerating himself and clearing his name."

An attorney for Spicer did not immediately respond to a call and an email for comment Thursday afternoon. Garcia did not have a listed attorney on the court docket.

Spicer is charged with lying when he claimed Wholesale had no relationship with National, when they shared common management and control, the indictment said.

Spicer is scheduled to be arraigned May 9; Johansson's arraignment is scheduled for May 16. Garcia's arraignment has not yet been scheduled, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office in Los Angeles.

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