

Manildra ordered to pay \$170,000 after silos spill grain into Shoalhaven River: The Environment Protection Authority has ordered Manildra to spend \$170,000 on community projects after its grain silos collapsed into the Shoalhaven River almost two years ago.

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FULL TEXT

The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) has ordered manufacturing company Manildra Group to spend \$170,000 on community projects for spilling 2,000 tonnes of grain into the Shoalhaven River.

In October 2024 two 30-metre silos, each holding 1,000 tonnes of wheat, collapsed at the Bomaderry facility, damaging a third silo & spilling product into the river & onto its banks.

The incident saw dozens of workers evacuated & a two-week multi-emergency response to stabilise the site before investigations by the EPA & SafeWork NSW commenced.

Manildra Group is a large family-owned Australian agribusiness & manufacturer which processes wheat into flour, vital wheat gluten, starch, glucose, & ethanol at more than 11 sites.

The cause of the silo collapse at its Shoalhaven Starches south coast site remains unknown & is the subject of an active investigation by Safework NSW.

Enforceable undertaking

The EPA has negotiated an enforceable undertaking for Shoalhaven Starches to fund projects that benefit the local community.

NSW EPA executive director of operations Stephen Beaman said that would ensure the company took responsibility for the incident.

"This was an incredibly serious incident, & the EPA took immediate action to protect the community & the environment," he said.

"If the company had not taken immediate steps to contain & remove the grain from the river, the impact from the massive release of nutrients & organic matter would have been severe."

The EPA said water monitoring by Shoalhaven Starches & the EPA showed no significant environmental harm to the river as a result of the silo collapse, but that "the incident warranted strong regulatory action".

Shoalhaven Starches will fund \$170,000 worth of foreshore protection & bank stabilisation, rehabilitation projects, & install fish-cleaning stations.

The EPA said it had directed Shoalhaven Starches to engage an independent expert to conduct an Environmental Hazard Analysis to help prevent future pollution incidents.

Community consultation

The ABC has approached Manildra Group for comment but is yet to receive a response.

The company has been ordered to keep the community informed about its operations & improvements to pollution prevention by establishing a community consultative committee (CCC).

Manildra Group said in a community newsletter published online last year that its CCC would provide "a formal forum for open, two-way dialogue between the company & the local community".

"The CCC will bring together a diverse cross-section of local residents, businesses, non-government organisations &

Shoalhaven City Council representatives to discuss site operations, upcoming projects & environmental performance," the newsletter said.

The same newsletter said that construction on a new grain silo had commenced & was expected to be completed by December last year.

It said a remaining three would be finished by February, but the ABC has been unable to confirm if the work has been completed.

DETAILS

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