



MEDIA ADVISORY

AIR FORCE SPACE COMMAND

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Air Force Releases Accident Investigation Report

**FOR IMMEDIATE
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PETERSON AFB, Colo. – A buildup of flammable hydrogen gas caused by a malfunctioning battery charger resulted in a fire inside an unmanned Minuteman III ICBM Launch Facility (LF) Alpha 06, near F.E. Warren Air Force Base, WY on May 23, 2008, according to an Air Force Space Command accident investigation board.

The board determined a loose nut on an electrical capacitor connection inside the battery charger caused overcharging of backup batteries, which created hydrogen buildup. The fire was ignited by a spark from the loose connection inside the battery charger, which may have occurred during a transfer from commercial power to back up power due to local thunderstorms. The fire burned a shotgun storage case and its contents, and damaged several cables that lead to the ICBM inside the adjacent launch tube. The fire was limited to the equipment rooms and did not enter the launch tube or damage the missile. The damage to the equipment totaled approximately \$1,030,000.

Contributing factors to the accident include unclear technical orders for the installation of the capacitors at the maintenance depot and quality assurance procedures which did not require inspection of the capacitors at the maintenance depot, a directed modification of the launch facility's environmental control system that eliminated the flow of make-up fresh air into the launch facility and the launcher equipment room and the use of duct tape on the umbilical cables and the holes cut in the shotgun case which exposed the internal foam insulation, both of which introduced flammable materials.

For more information contact Air Force Space Command at (719) 554-3731.