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Helena man killed in Omega Protein explosion; 3 injured

By WLOX Staff

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Jerry Lee Taylor, 25, was killed Monday morning after an explosion at the Omega Protein plant in Moss Point. Three other men, all subcontractors for the company, were injured. (Photo source: WLOX)



Three other men, all subcontractors for the company, were injured and taken to Singing River Hospital. (Photo source: WLOX)

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Christopher Hebert, 24, of Moss Point was killed in an accident at Omega Protein in 2012. Federal investigators have since said his death was avoidable. (Photo source: WLOX)

MOSS POINT, MS (WLOX) - Jerry Lee Taylor, 25, was killed Monday morning after an explosion at the Omega Protein plant in Moss Point. Taylor lived in the Helena community of Jackson County.

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Three other men, all subcontractors for the company, were injured and taken to Singing River Hospital. They have been identified as: Josh Walls, 34; Clay Davis, 40; and Lloyd McGill.

A hospital official told us two of the men were treated for minor injuries and have been released. The third victim underwent surgery Monday afternoon, and was still recovering Monday night.

The explosion happened around 9:30am. Moss Point Fire Chief Tommy Posey told WLOX News the men were repairing one of the metal towers that stored fish oil. He said the tank was supposed to be empty. Two men were working on the tank that exploded; Two were on the ground.

Posey said the explosion was so big, it scattered debris more than 85 yards away, and blew the cap off the tank onto a nearby building.

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Major Jackson said he heard the explosion near his office, on the east side of the Omega Protein plant. He's worked at the Moss Point facility for 51 years and said he has never experienced anything like this before.

All employees were sent home for the day and the plant was shut down as the investigation continues.

Omega Protein released a statement Monday evening regarding the deadly explosion.

"The Moss Point facility did not suffer any significant damage or loss of product inventory as a result of the incident, but the plant will not be operating until the conclusion of the on-site investigation. Omega Protein is working cooperatively with local officials as we aid in gathering details about today's events. We expect to have the facility back operating by week's end. Omega Protein's thoughts and prayers are with the workers and their families."

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Back in 2012, an Omega Protein worker was killed in an accident that federal investigators have since said was avoidable. Christopher Hebert, 24, of Moss Point had worked at the plant for three years. He was killed when he was caught in a rotating screw conveyor.

Following the fatal accident, an investigation by the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration found 25 safety and health violations at the plant. Hebert's family filed a wrongful death lawsuit, which is still pending in U.S. district court. It's set to go to trial in October.

David Harris Jr. one of the attorneys representing the Hebert Family in that litigation. He released the following statement from the family about Monday's fatal accident:

"Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the deceased and the other injured people. It appears Omega protein has continued to allow an unreasonably, unsafe and dangerous work environment to exist at the Moss Point plant. The family of Christopher Hebert certainly understands how tragedy feels. If Christopher had not been killed at the plant, he would have been able to continue his efforts to make Omega a safer place to work."

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The Moss Point plant and its adjacent shipyard employ about 300 people. There's work year-round, although it picks up during Menhaden fishing season, which runs from mid-April until the first of November.

In May 2011, three men were killed aboard an Omega Protein fishing boat called the Sandy Point. The Sandy Point collided with a 660-foot container ship in the Gulfport ship channel.

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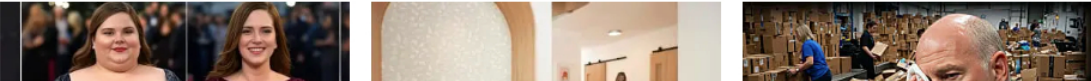
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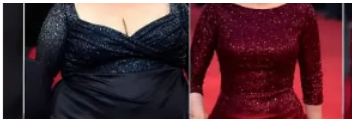
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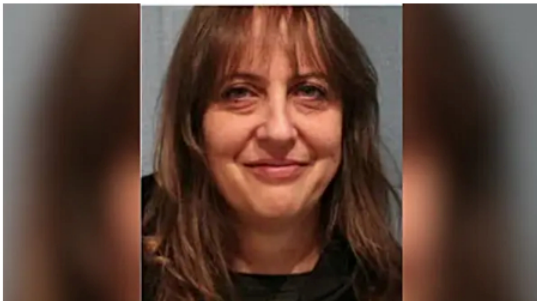
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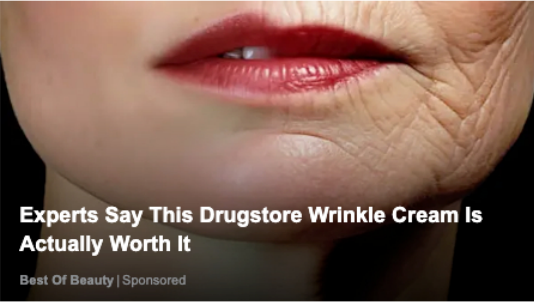
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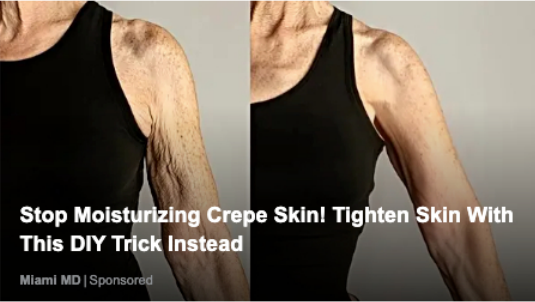
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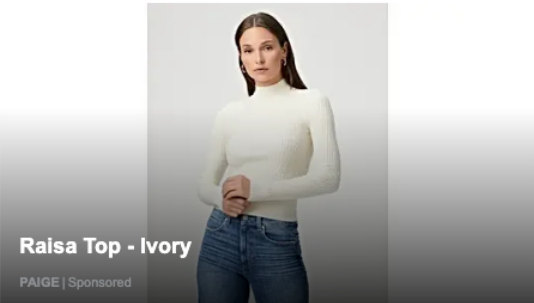
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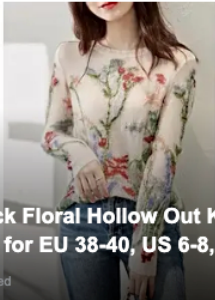


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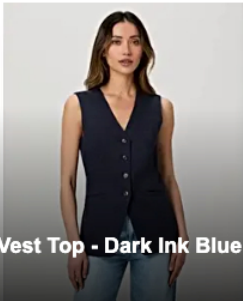


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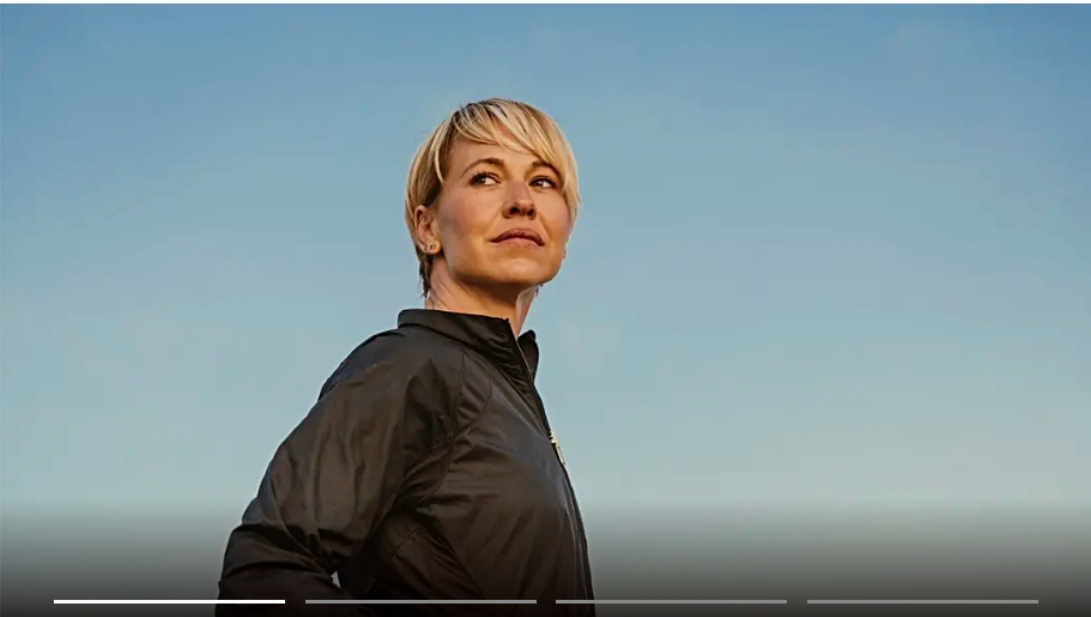
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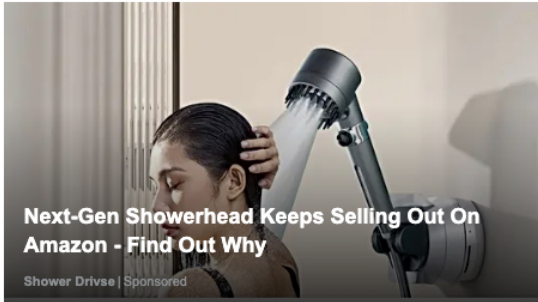
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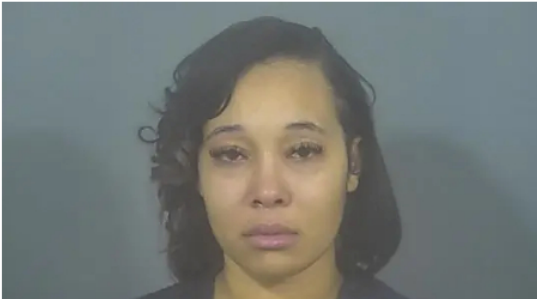
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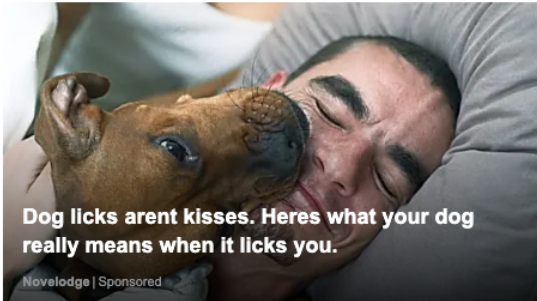
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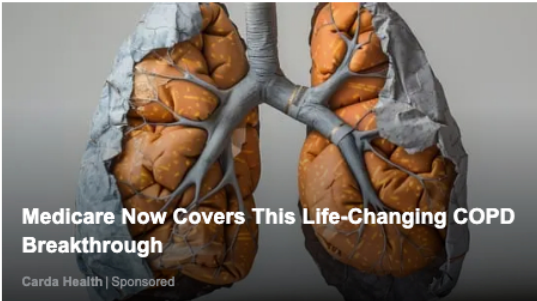
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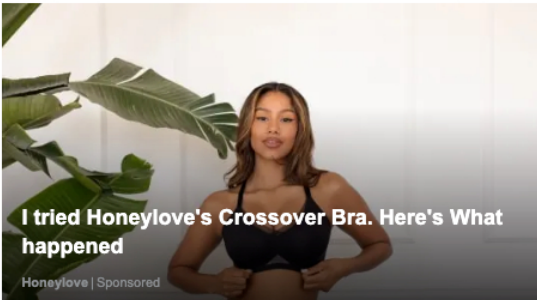
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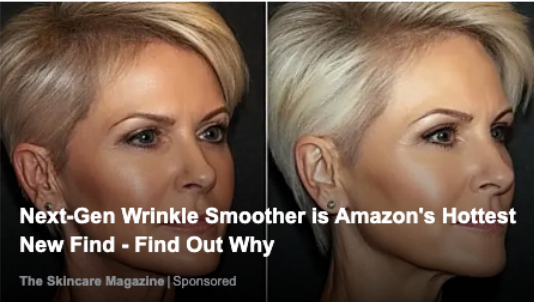
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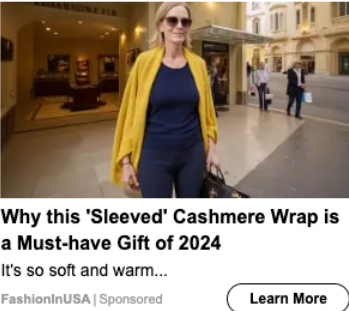


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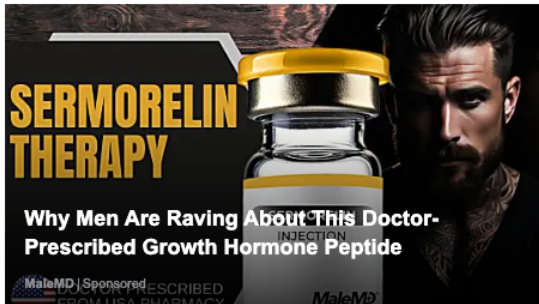
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