Cutting Torch Ignites Solvent



A worker died of injuries received in an explosion when hot material from a cutting torch ignited a can of solvent.

The incident occurred in a metal products plant which was temporarily out of operation.

The victim was using an acetylene cutting torch to take down a conveyor cable device. It appears that either sparks or pieces of molten metal from the cutting operation ignited either vapors or flammable material in the can. The worker died from complications of burns received in the resulting explosion and fire.

Solvents and sparks are a deadly combination. Fires and explosions which cause fatal injuries occur with tragic frequency in the workplace. This is why you are required to learn about the chemicals and materials located in your workplace – whether they are flammable or explosive or present other hazards.

Areas containing such materials should be marked as potential danger areas and trash and unused materials should be kept cleaned up. Before you begin heat-producing operations such as cutting or welding, be aware of your surroundings and make sure there are no explosion hazards or accumulations of refuse which could fuel a fire. Ventilation systems must be operating correctly to prevent any build-up of vapors. It is also important that contractors be alerted to potentially hazardous situations. Issuing of hot work permits is the best way of assuring that correct safe work procedures are followed. And this is a perfect example of what could possibly happen if the check list on a safe work permit is not followed.