Deadly Acid Spews Over Worker



A worker was attempting to remove an end plug from a pipe containing a 100 per cent concentration of anhydrous hydrofluoric acid under pressure. He applied sufficient pressure with a wrench to break the pipe, which had been corroded by the acid.

As the acid spewed out of the pipe, it knocked off the victim’s protective head and face shield and he received acid burns to his face.

The worker did not reach a safety shower immediately and did not remain in it long enough. His face was severely damaged by the acid, and the toxic fluoride from the acid was absorbed into his body. He also inhaled acid vapor. Cardiac arrest occurred several times at the hospital. Attempts to correct the situation and to save him were unsuccessful.

Know where safety showers are located in your workplace, and how to use them – even if you are blinded by a chemical. Know how to respond to an emergency with any chemical you work with. Wear the required protective equipment whenever you work around a chemical. Piping should be depressured, drained, and, in case of chemicals, washed out before being worked on. Pipes containing acid and other chemicals must be labeled, and possible corrosion damage must be monitored. Know and understand the lockout procedures for piping systems at your workplace.