

Safety and health alert

04/98 Injured by exploding nut

Incident

On 18 April 1998 in Busselton, an electrical fitter severely damaged his left eye and may lose the sight of the eye, when a nut he was removing from a two horsepower pump motor exploded.

The fitter could not remove the brass dome nut from the impeller of the pump using a spanner and therefore heated the nut with oxy propane. As he bent over to inspect the nut, it exploded and a piece of the nut pierced his left eye.

The fitter was working alone and was not wearing safety glasses. Following the accident he drove himself to a nearby factory and was taken to the Busselton Hospital. He was later transferred to the Royal Perth Hospital by the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Factors

Factors contributing to this accident were:

1. The nut could not be removed merely with the spanners available.
2. The nut was heated using oxy propane to an unspecified temperature.
3. The nut was contained within the impeller of the pump and therefore when it exploded, pieces were projected.
4. The fitter was not wearing safety glasses and at the moment the nut exploded, he was bent over looking at the nut.

Recommendations

1. Employers are urged to adopt a policy requiring the wearing of appropriate eye protection that meets the requirements of AS/NZS 1337:1992 at all times in workshops and areas where eye injuries are a possibility. (Many responsible contractors and employers already do this - refer to section 19(1)(d) of the *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984* and regulation 3.33 of the Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996)
2. Persons working in a workshop must be wswaanrp0074.aspx and directed to wear eye protection in situations where an eye injury is foreseeable.
3. When removing nuts, use the most appropriate tool. If a naked flame must be applied, consider all the inherent risks to injury or harm this action can cause. (Refer regulation 3.1 of the Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996).
4. Workers must be alert for hazards in the workplace and advise their employer of such hazards if they cannot effectively deal with them themselves. (Refer to section 20(1) and 20(2)(d) of the *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984*).

Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the WorkSafe internet site www.worksafe.wa.gov.au, or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email: safety@docep.wa.gov.au.

