

HAZARD ALERT

CIGARETTE LIGHTER STARTS FIRE



Recently in New Brunswick, two workers were seriously burned while working in an automobile garage. Having sprayed a flammable cleaning solvent over the entire vehicle, the workers had begun to hand clean the vehicle just prior to the explosion. The proper use according to the manufacturer instructions was to pour the solvent on a cloth and rub over the surface of the vehicle. The combination of improper use of flammable cleaning solvent and insufficient exhaust ventilation resulted in the formation of an explosive atmosphere in the garage, which was ignited when a

worker lit a cigarette. The resulting explosion and fire quickly grew because the flammable solvent and other chemicals were stored in the same garage bay.

Recommended Preventive Action

- Never keep more than one day's supply of chemicals in your immediate work area.
- Store and mix chemicals in a well-ventilated chemical storage room separate from the work area.
- All workers who use or work in the vicinity of controlled products must be trained by a competent person in WHMIS.
- Employers shall ensure that employees receive training and instruction on the specific controlled products used in the workplace. Follow manufacturer instructions located on product labels or technical bulletins.
- Review with staff and make available for future reference all Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) pertaining to controlled products used in the workplace. **New products must be reviewed with staff before use.**
- Enforce strict no smoking policies in areas where flammable chemicals are used or stored.
- Keep ignition sources, including electricity, away from flammable chemicals.
- Mechanical ventilation is required to ensure workers are not exposed to chemical concentrations above the allowable Threshold Limit Values (TLV), and to prevent the build-up of flammable vapours.
- Fire extinguishers must be readily available, and a fire evacuation plan should be developed and posted.
- First aid supplies and a trained first aider must be on site.