

FIRE HAZARD – METHYL HYDRATE

A worker was recently involved in an industrial accident, which left him suffering from severe burns to his hands and body. The worker was employed as a glass mechanic for a company that prepares and installs a variety of glass products. When the accident occurred, the worker was applying and igniting, METHYL HYDRATE to the work surface and a violent explosion and fire occurred.

Another recent tragic case involved persons working with METHYL HYDRATE in the food services industry. Workers attempted to add fuel (methyl hydrate) to warming burners from open containers, without realizing that a source of ignition still existed. Large containers of Methyl Hydrate exploded and caught on fire.

METHYL HYDRATE is a synonym for METHANOL, a chemical that must be treated with care. Any person who handles Methyl Hydrate must be made aware of the fact that this is a highly flammable substance that can be ignited under almost all ambient temperature conditions (flash point is 11.1 degrees C). Methyl Hydrate burns with a very clear, clean flame that is extremely difficult to see.

Methyl Hydrate is a controlled product as defined in the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) Regulation. This regulation requires that all controlled products must be properly labelled and the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)

must be readily available for workers in the workplace.



The employers must adequately educate and train their workers on the safe handling, storage and care of controlled products such as Methyl Hydrate.

The following are minimum measures that must be in place to ensure the safe handling of METHYL HYDRATE:

1. Quantities of METHYL HYDRATE should be stored in a fire-resistant storage cabinet in a well-ventilated area that is separate from the work area.
2. At the work location, it should be used in minimal quantities and should be stored in and dispensed from a CSA labelled safety container equipped with a flashback arrestor.
3. Any absorbent material used in the application of METHYL HYDRATE must be stored in an approved fire-proof disposal container.
4. Smoking must be prohibited in the work area when flammable substances such as Methyl Hydrate are present.
5. Adequate fire extinguishing equipment and an approved fire blanket must be available in the immediate work area.
6. A Material Safety Data Sheet should be available at the workplace.
7. All containers must have either a supplier label or workplace label to provide the user with information on the safe handling of the container and its contents.