

No job is more important.



Safety Alert

N°3 2001

PRIMER VAPOURS IGNITED BY FAN



Details

A floor-finishing contractor sustained serious burns to his upper body when flammable vapours from a solvent-based primer and bonding agent ignited.

The contractor had liberally applied Vibro Neoprene Primer – by broom – to a non-porous floor in a compact and poorly ventilated area. An explosive atmosphere was created when flammable vapours from the primer accumulated during the application process.

On completing the primer application, the contractor placed a portable domestic electric fan in the work area to aid with drying and to disperse vapours. When the fan was turned on, it ignited the atmosphere causing an explosion and fire.

Contributing Factors

An investigation into this accident revealed that:

- the contractor did not request, and was not provided or supplied with, a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for the product
- the safety precautions outlined on the product's container label were not observed
- a portable domestic electrical fan – not designed for use in environments containing flammable vapours – was used.

Recommendations

All industries, contractors and trades that use primers and bonding agents should:

- acquire a copy of the MSDS to determine whether the substance is hazardous before it is used at a workplace
- ensure that the storage, handling and use of the hazardous substance at a workplace is in accordance with the MSDS
- ensure that plant and equipment used in any environment containing flammable vapours is safe, appropriate for the planned task and meets the requirements of Australian Standard AS/NZS 2381.1:1999 *Electrical equipment for explosive atmospheres – Selection, installation and maintenance*.

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