



SafetyLetter

June 2010

-An employee was MIG welding a three-compartment tanker wagon, which was approved for delivering home heating oil, diesel fuel and gasoline. The tanker was reported to be purged of any residue gasoline though traces of gasoline were identified on the hose reel. The employee was repairing a hairline crack along the vapor recovery system when an explosion and ensuing fire occurred. The employee sustained third-degree burns over 20 percent of his body and was hospitalized. According to the PEI Safety Committee, this accident should serve as a reminder that all sources of vapor must be identified and eliminated prior to doing any "hot" work on a container known to previously contain a flammable substance. All tanks and lines should be verified as properly purged prior to commencing work. The committee notes that it is standard industry practice to inert the space with nitrogen or carbon dioxide before beginning any hot work. If the purge had been verified, the space continuously monitored for the presence of vapor, and properly inerted, this accident could have been avoided. The committee also notes that the presence of liquid in the hose reel is a strong indicator that vapors are present in the tank, even if the vessel had previously been purged.

-A worker was pumping diesel fuel into a tank when it ignited. The employee was burned by the fire and hospitalized. An investigation after the accident revealed that an electrical extension cord was plugged and present inside the work area. The PEI Safety Committee notes that any operation involving the transfer of a flammable substance requires extreme caution and states that a hazard assessment of the area would have revealed the potential ignition source. The committee states that the removal of potential ignition sources (electrical, static, etc.) will greatly reduce the fire and explosion potential of handling operations. The committee states that all activities involving the transfer of flammable liquids should include a pre-task safety analysis, tool box talk and safety check.

-A service technician experienced a near miss when he arrived at a job to perform an ST30 Test. After arrival, the tech noticed that the site appeared to be in a 'closing' state. Upon entering a backroom to check the alarm status, the tech found workers cutting PVC pipes with a hand saw. In the same area, the tech reported seeing standing water and electrical cords on the floor along with a portable 60 watt light. The tech informed the site owner that the situation was an unsafe work environment due to the presence of standing water and electrical cords, yet the owner refused to stop the work or change the unsafe conditions. The tech then contacted his supervisor and was told to not work under the unsafe conditions and to vacate the premises. According to the PEI Safety Committee, this near miss should serve as a reminder to work safely. The committee notes that each site has "work safe" issues which require mitigation before work begins. Working on a site for which there is little consideration for safety is risky and a worker should make an effort in situations such as this to dissuade other parties from ignoring safety hazards.

Suggestions made by the PEI Safety Committee are offered for informational purposes only. PEI assumes no responsibility for the results produced from the advice offered by the Committee.

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