

Sent: Tue, Dec 10, 2013 2:17 pm

Subject: CSB Releases Safety Message Focusing on Preventing Accidents in High School Labs

PLEASE! Share this with EVERY SCIENCE TEACHER! I hope this video, along with the "lessons learned" will have an impact and there will be no more preventable methanol incidents.

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CSB Releases Safety Message Focusing on Preventing Accidents in High School Chemistry Labs

Washington, DC, December 10, 2013—The U.S. Chemical Safety Board (CSB) today released, "[After the Rainbow](#)," a video safety message focused on potential dangers in high school chemistry laboratories. The message features Calais Weber, an accident survivor, who on January 23, 2006, at age 15 was burned over 40 per cent of her body during a chemistry demonstration performed by her teacher at a prestigious boarding school she attended in Ohio. In her own words, Calais describes the demonstration, called the "rainbow experiment," that was meant to show how various mineral salts produce different color flames when burned. Mineral salts were mixed with highly flammable methanol in small dishes.

CSB Chairperson Rafael Moure-Eraso said, "This is a new kind of video safety message for the CSB. Too often, chemical accident victims –survivors as well as fatalities -- are forgotten as time goes on. In this video, Ms. Weber tells a painful and poignant story that we hope resonates in high school and academic labs across the country." The video is a follow up to "[Experimenting with Danger](#)," concerning laboratory accidents in three major universities. In "After the Rainbow" Calais describes how she was standing in the first row as matches were dropped into each little dish. When one flame began to dim, Calais's teacher reached for a gallon-sized bottle of methanol. She began to pour the liquid on the open flame, and it exploded. "And because I was right in front, I got the brunt of it," Calais recalls. "I remember thinking, 'I'm on fire. Oh, my gosh, I'm on fire.'"

While attending school, Calais worked as a model. After the accident, she spent two and a half months in a hospital where she endured painful treatments and numerous surgeries, including facial skin grafts. She now volunteers with Angel Faces, a program designed to empower young women with facial disfigurements, often due to burn injuries. Calais goes on to describe what should have been done differently on the day of the accident, listing a lack of safety gear and the large amount of methanol present in the room. And she has advice for other teenagers who may feel unsafe in the classroom, saying, "While it can seem daunting, it's perfectly ok to speak up if you're not feeling safe, to

always question, and if you're given a piece of information on safety, read it."

Calais believes that her accident was entirely preventable and that with better attention to good safety practices, similar accidents can also be avoided. She says, "It feels with this type of injury that you've had so much taken away from you unnecessarily and to keep reading about other people who have had very similar experiences, it's tragic and shouldn't happen."

CSB videos may be streamed and downloaded at www.CSB.gov from the CSB video room. They are also available on www.YouTube.com/uscsb.

The CSB is an independent federal agency charged with investigating industrial chemical accidents. The agency's board members are appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate. CSB investigations look into all aspects of chemical accidents, including physical causes such as equipment failure as well as inadequacies in regulations, industry standards, and safety management systems.

The Board does not issue citations or fines but does make safety recommendations to plants, industry organizations, labor groups, and regulatory agencies such as OSHA and EPA. Visit our website, www.csb.gov.

For more information, contact Communications Manager Hillary Cohen, cell 202-446-8094 or Sandy Gilmour, Public Affairs, cell 202-251-5496.

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