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From: Kim Gates <kim.gates@stonybrook.edu>

Sent: Wed, Oct 8, 2014 8:16 am

Subject: FOLLOW UP: Lessons Learned: ANOTHER METHANOL fire sends 4 students to hospital with burn injuries

Lessons Learned: Make sure you have taken all of the safety training that is required and available to you. Make sure that everyone in your area has had their safety training. And always remember to use that training when working with hazardous chemicals and procedures. If not, someone may be seriously injured and in this case, fired for not following the training.

If you're not sure what training you need, read the "training summary" here: <http://www.stonybrook.edu/ehs/lab/training/>

DENVER TEACHER FIRED AFTER CAUSING CHEMICAL FIRE THAT INJURED 4 STUDENTS

Tags: us_CO, education, follow-up, injury, flammables, methanol

DENVER - The chemistry teacher who caused an explosion that injured four students, one critically, at a Denver charter school has been terminated according to a letter mailed to parents at STRIVE Preparatory Schools SMART Academy.

First-year teacher Daniel Powell was demonstrating the burning properties of methanol to his high school class on Sept. 15 when he started a fire that shot to the back of the classroom and hit a 16-year-old boy in the chest.

Three other students were treated and released from the hospital.

According to U.S. Chemical Safety Board, Powell was not adequately trained.

Investigators said he ignited methanol to create a flame in front of the students, and when the flame didn't rise as high as he had hoped, he poured more methanol onto it.

That created a "jet fire" that shot 15 feet. Methanol is highly flammable, and the CSB says it should not be used in such large quantities.

Student Dominic Vargas remains in the hospital with serious burns to the upper part of his body, according to his brother. He said Dominic may be released in the next two weeks, but will have lasting injuries.

"The fire ball hit him from his chest up. So his face, his neck, his chest, his arms and his legs were burned," said Johnny Vargas Tuesday. "He's very athletic, plays football, and this is going to play a big part in where he's going in life."

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Lessons Learned: How much methanol do you have in your stock/prep room? Do you always remember to leave the large bottles in the prep room and only use the smallest amount possible in the classroom? Do you have a written hazard assessment & safety protocol for the demo?

On the same day that the CSB issued a notice about a methanol fire and the hazards/risks associated with class demos, ANOTHER METHANOL fire occurred! I know (hope) my messages are reaching everyone on Long Island since these reports are coming from outside of our area, but how can we reach all teachers? Let me know if you have any ideas!

- #1: Don't use methanol unless absolutely necessary for the procedure.
- #2: Only use the smallest bottle possible in the classroom - NEVER the original stock bottle.
- #3: NEVER relight the fire - even if you really believe the fire is extinguished - use a second set up.
- #4: Use a plexiglass shield between your demo and the students.
- #5: Everyone needs eye protection.
- #6: Have an emergency plan and PRACTICE! The regular school fire drills are not enough.

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DENVER - A chemistry teacher is on paid leave after four students were injured when an experiment went wrong at the Strive Prep School on the Lalo Delgado campus.

"We are reviewing all of the safety policies and protocols as they relate to the science lab," said school spokeswoman Lindsay Neil. "We've suspended all science lab activity in our network of schools."

The teacher was identified as first-year teacher Daniel Powell.

The U.S. Chemical Safety Board tells 7NEWS: "The CSB will be sending two investigators over to the scene of the accident -- they should arrive on scene very shortly."

Denver Fire spokesman Mark Watson said the students suffered burn injuries, and although he could not describe their conditions, he said any burn injury to the face or mouth area should be considered serious.

Denver Health said three students were treated and released and the fourth had been transported to University Hospital because of the severity of his burns.

Strive Prep School is a Denver Public Schools charter school located at 3201 West Arizona Avenue. The Denver Fire Department received the call about the fire at 7:54 a.m.

A 10th grade student, David Mathis, was in the classroom and told 7NEWS that the chemistry teacher was lighting methanol when it exploded. He said the fire extended up to the ceiling and out towards the back wall of the classroom, and all of the students who were hurt were sitting in the back of the room.

"I only saw one of the students, but his skin was peeling off, and it looked like at least second-degree burns all over," said Mathis. "We were all just chaotic. We were trying to figure out what just happened. We just saw fire everywhere in the room, too, and we were just trying to put it out and help the students."