

**Lessons Learned: Please share this with every science teacher you know! Simple precautions could have prevented the initial incident. These precautions (shielding, keeping methanol away from pre-lit matches, dishes, etc) have been mentioned in many of the past "lessons learned" I've sent out. I'm sure all of you by now have taken these steps to create a safer lab, but if not, and all of the warnings and pictures did not change your practices, this lawsuit may get your attention.**

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#### **LINCOLN PARK HIGH SCHOOL CHEM LAB FIRE LEADS TO LAWSUIT**

<http://www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20140417/lincoln-park/lincoln-park-high-school-chem-lab-fire-leads-lawsuit>

**Tags: us\_IL, laboratory, follow-up, injury, methanol**

**LINCOLN PARK — The mother of a student who was burned in a chemistry lab fire at Lincoln Park High School is suing the school, Chicago Public Schools and the teacher involved.**

**Jennifer Dryden, the mother of student Tatiana Schwirblat, filed the lawsuit last week arguing the chemistry teacher, Joy Walter, and other defendants were negligent.**

**The chemistry lab fire broke out just before noon Nov. 25 and injured a total of five students, authorities said at the time.**

**Tatiana, 16, suffered second-degree burns, including burns on her face, authorities said.**

**The lawsuit filed in Cook County Circuit Court claims Walter was demonstrating an experiment involving the ignition of elements when the fire erupted.**

**Walter was igniting the element cobalt in a Petri dish with a match and poured an "unmeasured" amount of methanol over the cobalt and match, which sparked an explosion, according to the lawsuit.**

**Tatiana's clothes caught fire, causing burns on her body and face, according to the suit.**

**The lawsuit claims Walter failed to take steps to protect students from injury, including putting up a shield around the Petri dish to prevent injury in case of an explosion.**

**It also claims she failed to measure out the methanol before using it as an accelerant in a chemical experiment.**

**Another student who witnessed the experiment said watching her classmate's sweater catch fire was the "scariest thing ever."**

**The witness said the flames quickly spread to another lab table and ignited the girl's sweater.**

**A Chicago Fire Department official at the time said Tatiana was wearing eye protection, but suffered second-degree burns on her face and abdomen.**

**She was treated at Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center.**

A family member of Walter reached by phone Wednesday referred all questions to Chicago Public Schools. A CPS spokeswoman said the school system does not comment on pending litigation.

Dryden is represented by Sean Driscoll of Clifford Law Offices and is seeking damages in excess of \$50,000.

### Original Report

LINCOLN PARK — A 16-year-old student suffered burns on her face and four others were hospitalized after a fire broke out in a Lincoln Park High School chemistry lab Monday morning, authorities said. The Chicago Fire Department responded to the blaze about 11:55 a.m. at the school at 2001 N. Orchard St. The fire started after a chemical-filled glass container that had been set aflame broke, and the contents spilled on a table while still on fire, Assistant Deputy Fire Commissioner Mark Nielsen said.

A student, who was wearing eye protection, suffered a burn to her forehead before the teacher was able to put out the flames with a handheld extinguisher, Nielsen said. The 16-year-old sustained second-degree burns on her face and her abdomen and was taken to Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center, Fire Department. The fire started after a chemical-filled glass container that had been set aflame broke, and the contents spilled on a table while still on fire, Assistant Deputy Fire Commissioner Mark Nielsen said.

A student, who was wearing eye protection, suffered a burn to her forehead before the teacher was able to put out the flames with a handheld extinguisher, Nielsen said.

The 16-year-old sustained second-degree burns on her face and her abdomen and was taken to Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center, Fire Department spokesman Larry Langford said. Four others had some redness on their skin from very minor burns and were taken to Illinois Masonic, Langford said.

Nielsen said the class was experimenting with methanol, which was in the container that started the fire.

"Nothing suspicious at all, the container simply broke," he said.

Dominic Ledezma, a senior at the high school who was in a classroom on the floor above where the fire started, said alarms sounded in the building.

"At first my teacher thought it was planned" as a fire drill and not a real fire, Ledezma said. "She said, 'Stay in your seats,' but we could smell the fire."

The building was eventually evacuated.

Chicago Public Schools officials did not immediately comment.

<http://www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20131125/lincoln-park/lincoln-park-high-school-chemistry-lab-fire-leaves-student-burned>

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