

Sent: Fri, Oct 24, 2014 8:21 am

Subject: FOLLOW UP: Lessons Learned: Charges filed against teacher involved in methanol fire

Lessons Learned:

Follow up to the Denver methanol incident. If you still don't have written safety hazard assessments and protocols, and still don't have the safety training because you think it takes too much time, perhaps knowing that this teacher was fired and now faces criminal charges will convince you and your supervisors that this is important.

FORMER TEACHER CHARGED IN LAB EXPLOSION THAT INJURED STUDENTS

Tags: us_CO, laboratory, follow-up, injury, methanol

DENVER (AP/CBS4) – Charges have been filed against a teacher who was fired after four students were burned, one seriously, when a fire erupted in a Denver high school chemistry laboratory.

According to Lynn Kimbrough with the district attorney's office, Daniel Powell, 22, "has been served with a summons charging him with four counts of third-degree assault, a Class 1 misdemeanor."

Powell was conducting a demonstration with methanol when the explosion occurred on Sept. 15.

Three of the students are back in school and the fourth student, who was not identified, continues to improve.

"He has a long road ahead of him. We are providing counseling to students and faculty," said Lindsay Neil, spokeswoman for the Science, Math and Arts Academy charter school on Oct. 7.

Powell suffered minor injuries to his hands and declined medical treatment, Neil said after the accident.

FIRED SCIENCE TEACHER DID NOT HAVE STATE LICENSE

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

DENVER – Three weeks ago, Daniel Powell conducted a science experiment that went so wrong, four students were injured, one seriously. He has now been fired and state records show he did not have valid teaching license.

"It's a horrible, unfortunate incident and our hearts bleed for the families and for those students," Nora Flood, president of the Colorado League of Charter Schools, said.

Powell was a teacher at SMART Academy which is part of a network of charter schools called Strive Prep. He was trying to show students a chemistry experiment with fire and methanol when a fire started causing serious burns to one student.

"It could've been anybody at any school," Flood said.

In a search of the data base which shows records of teacher licenses, there is no listing of a Daniel Powell with a current Colorado teacher's license. Charter schools are not required to have licensed teachers in the classroom.

Flood says that's by design.

"There are always challenges in finding good teachers and so we're actually able to go outside the realm of the traditional teacher licensure program to try to find the best fit for our schools," Flood said. "It's one of the things we hold dear and that is, that it is up to the school to be able to determine for themselves whether they want to have that licensure piece."

Flood says that allows, for example, a science-based school to seek a professional engineer to teach students about engineering.

"You have to be an expert in the field you are going to teach," Flood said.

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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."