Cleaning Solvent Causes Fatal Burns



A textile worker was working on a conveyor belt. At the end of a day’s production she had to clean the belt using a highly volatile cleaning solvent. This solvent was used very close to an oven. It caught fire and exploded. The worker was badly burned and died as a result of the incident.

An investigation into her death discovered several factors contributing to this incident. They included a lack of fire and safety training, no safety inspections, no safety committees, a lack of detailed material labelling, no availability of a fire smothering blanket and overall poor communication about safety.

Many workplaces routinely use solvents for various tasks. Unfortunately their volatility is often underestimated and they are used without much consideration for safety near sources of ignition.

Do you know the flashpoints of the materials you are working with? What are the potential sources of ignition in your area? It is vital (and required by law) that anyone who is working around flammable substances be aware of the many potential dangers.