Emergency Showers Fatality File



Employee Receives Burns When Steam Escapes Pipeline

At approximately 7 a.m. on April 22, 2009, Employee #1 and a coworker were working from an elevated position on the condenser of the K-12 unit of the Hexion Specialty Chemicals Company. Employee #1 and a coworker were wearing Tyvek suits, steel toe boots, safety glasses, leather gloves, hard hats and personal fall protection equipment's. They removed a flange on the east side of condenser and connected a vacuum hose. They moved to the west side of the condenser to remove the spool piece and noticed that the condenser was still warm. They informed employees, who had come back to the area, that the condenser was warm. An employee checked out the system and instructed them to continue with the work. They removed the spool section of the condenser and a small quantity of steam released from the kettle side of open pipe. They notified the employee, and another employee instructed them to come down. A coworker asked an employee to close the valve on top of the pack column because there was vapor emerging from it. Employee #1 and the coworker were disconnecting their fall protection lines to come down when an employee closed the valve on top of the pack column, which opened the bypass valve that was interlocked with the valve on top of the pack column. As the bypass valve was opened, hot steam and resin escaped the pipeline and covered Employee #1. The employee heard yelling from the K-12 area, and he opened the valve on top of the pack column, which closed the bypass valve, and it stopped the steam and resin. Employee #1 and the coworker came down to the platform level and the coworker placed Employee #1 under the emergency shower and removed his PPE and clothing. An employee came out of the control room to help out and saw Employee #1 under the emergency shower. Another employee took Employee #1 to US Health Works Medical Group in Gardena and Employee #1 was treated and released for second degree burns on both ankles, both hands, left elbow and neck. Employee #1 went back to the clinic the next day for a follow-up appointment, and he was referred to a specialist. Employee #1 saw the specialist on April 24, 2009, and he was admitted to Torrance Memorial Medical Center, where he was hospitalized until May 6, 2009. The accident was caused because the site employer did not relieve the internal pressure nor other methods were utilized to prevent sudden release of pressure or spraying of liquid before contractor's employees were allowed to work on K-12 unit.