TOOLBOX TALKS

***Hand Sanitizer Risks***

A worker used an 80% alcohol‐based hand sanitizer as recommended by current hygiene recommendations in the COVID‐19 plan. Just after the application to his hands, but before the liquid disinfectant had evaporated and completely dried, the worker touched a metal surface. On this metal surface, an accumulation of static electricity created an ignition source, and the disinfectant (ethyl‐alcohol based) flashed, resulting in an almost invisible flame (blue) in both hands. The contractor managed to extinguish the flames but suffered from first and second‐degree burns to both hands. Here is how we can protect ourselves.

Potential Cause(s)

* Hand gels contain high concentrations of alcohol. Once the hand sanitizer was applied, the worker did not ensure that the gel had completely evaporated before proceeding with work activity.
* Alcohol vapors can flame or flash if exposed to an ignition source, switches, or any surface containing static electricity.

Corrective/Preventive Actions

* When using alcohol‐based hand sanitizers, be sure to allow for the sanitizer to dry/evaporate before resuming work activity.
* Avoid touching any surface until the gel has completely dried. Stay away from any potential ignition source while sanitizer is still wet.
* If you are not sure about the use of alcohol‐based disinfectants, please use warm water and soap to wash your hands if available rather than using alcohol‐based hand sanitizer.

Note: Discuss the company’s policy on how to report unsafe equipment or acts on your site.