Know What You’re Working With:

May 1, 2014

Seven employees of Cooper Power Systems were injured following an acid mixture spill that gave the workers chemical burns on the skin and respiratory tract infections. The company faces $166,000 in proposed fines.

The accident occurred when workers were directed by management to clean up roughly 20 gallons of a phosphoric/sulfuric acid mixture. According to OSHA, workers were directed to respond to the spill without completing a hazard evaluation or providing personal protective equipment. The company was also cited for failing to develop an emergency response plan, failure to provide decontamination and first aid for responders, and failure to provide respiratory and PPE equipment for use during cleanup.

“Cooper Power Systems showed a complete disregard for the health and safety of its workers when they made them perform a cleanup of a dangerous chemical without providing them with required training and protective gear,” -Nick Walters, OSHA’s regional administrator in Chicago.

Many of us work with extremely hazardous chemicals on a daily basis. In order to keep everyone in the department safe, know the hazards of what you are working with (i.e. corrosive, explosive, flammable, mutagenic), appropriate PPE and safety protocols for working with those reagents, and when working with particularly dangerous reagents (alkyl lithium reagents for example) make sure your coworkers are aware of the risks and are available to respond in case of an emergency.

Safety Question

Fume hoods are an important safety device designed to limit our exposure to hazardous or toxic fumes, vapors or dust. What are the five main parts of a fume hood?

The first research group to submit the highest percentage of correct answers will receive a pizza party (up to three large pizzas) courtesy of the USU Student Safety Committee. All members of a research group must submit responses in order to qualify. Responses must be submitted by each individual. Individual responses must be submitted to snanderson@aggiemail.usu.edu by May 21, 2014.