

SAFETY - INCIDENT NOTICE

TITLE:

Caustic incident

TARGET AUDIENCE:

Ops, CCS, CE

Introduction:

A Waste Water Recycling Operative has been hospitalised following a chemical burn injury which occurred whilst inspecting a Caustic chemical dosing rig. Caustic soda (sodium hydroxide NaOH) is a very strong Alkali and can cause serious chemical burns. Please refamiliarise yourselves on all safety procedures that must be followed when working with chemicals.

Information:

Whilst carrying out a non-intrusive inspection of a previous repair, an operative came into contact with caustic, causing chemical burns to their face. The work was being carried out in a caustic dosing kiosk.

The operative was inspecting the dosing pipework post repair. During the inspection, the operative opened the kiosk doors to complete a visual inspection. Upon opening the doors, it became clear that the Perspex safety shields were heavily contaminated and therefore a non-intrusive inspection was not possible.

The operative decided to have a "quick look" behind the Perspex doors. At this point a small leak became larger and sprayed caustic into their face, causing a burn injury. The operative attended the serious burns unit at Sheffield hospital for treatment of the burns and was admitted for 24 hours.

The required PPE for this task is chemical resistant face and eye protection (goggles and face shield with acetate visor OR chemical hood) as specified in the Caustic Soda COSHH Risk Assessment.

Immediate Actions:

- Everybody working with chemicals MUST know the correct operating procedures in place - if you are unsure, stop and seek advice
- Please discuss your team's use of chemicals at comm cells. Review the chemicals used on your site and ensure you are aware of the required controls. The chemicals we use can cause serious harm and we need to ensure we are not complacent about the hazards and the controls required
- Ensure dosing kiosk protective screens are clean and always wear the required PPE for the task. PPE must be available and in use as per the COSHH assessments and training. If it's not safe, do not start the task
- Ensure Emergency Showers, Eye Wash stations or other means of chemical first aid are in service and working prior to commencing work and are used if you come into contact with chemicals
- Take 20, think about the risks and never cut corners, even if it's for a short period

