



Safety ALERT

SYNOPSIS

Employee was moving a hose on a portable heater when he felt the air currents blow over his face. Approximately 10 minutes later he felt his right eye begin to burn. The employee sought medical treatment and was diagnosed with a chemical burn to the eye.

DESCRIPTION

Two employees were assigned to repair a 390 excavator at a customer's job site. The employees were aware that the machine contained EcoSafe hydraulic fluid. They were also aware that the customer and Western States require additional eye protection when working on equipment containing EcoSafe so they donned goggles when breaking into the hydraulic lines. This work resulted in residual amounts of EcoSafe on various machine surfaces.

The next day, the temperature was approximately minus 20° F. The employees built a warning shelter and obtained a Frost Fighter Space Heater to help warm the hydraulic fluid. The fluid needed to be warmed to allow it to properly flow and drain as they proceeded with their repairs. The injured employee, who was wearing wrap-around safety eyewear now, was relocating a heater hose so that it would blow directly on the hydraulic tank. During this task, the employee felt the air currents reflect off the hydraulic tank and back into his face. He did not feel anything enter his eye. He described it as the air moving from the bottom of his face up and over. Approximately 10 minutes later he felt a burning sensation in his right eye.

LESSONS LEARNED

This is the second serious eye injury related to EcoSafe within 4 months. Western States chooses not to use this product due to its potential risk for injury. Employees may still encounter it in customer equipment though, so it is important that we know how to protect ourselves. In this case, we have seen the need to more consistently wear additional eye protection when working near this product.

The following safe work practices will be used in the future when working with EcoSafe fluid.

- 1. Chemical goggles or foam-lined glasses secured with headband will be worn when within 2 feet of a machine that contains EcoSafe fluid.**
- 2. Chemical goggles will be worn whenever working on a system that contains EcoSafe fluid.**
- 3. Use gloves and/or immediately wash hands when finished working near EcoSafe fluid or prior to taking a break.**
- 4. Mark all drain pans, buckets, filters, etc that are used for handling EcoSafe fluid. Chemical goggles will be worn when handling these items.**

In addition, we must move beyond just selecting our PPE based on our understanding of a policy or simply what is "required." Instead, we must look at the potential hazard and the intent of the policy or safe work practice. Leadership must improve communication and reinforce this expectation too.

