

Incident:

An operator failed to wear required eye protection (goggles) while interacting with a diaphragm pump filled with concentrated sulfuric acid. A small droplet of acid leaked out and got into his right eye causing micro burns on his cornea.

What: Eye burn with acid

When: 25-May-2022

Where: OTH, Houston, USA

Summary:

A Utilities operator working the night shift was asked to use the concentrated sulfuric acid pump to neutralize the pH inside the wastewater tank. This was a rainy night, and the operator was informed by the previous shift that the pump has been "acting up". During the process of neutralization, the utilities operator said he saw what appeared to be a pinhole at the pump and decided to get a closer look. He indicated that due to the rain, his goggles were wet and foggy so he decided to remove them to get a better look at the pump which was fully operational at the time. As he approached the pump, a small drop of acid got into his right eye causing instant burning, temporary blindness, and extreme pain. He was rushed to the hospital where an Eye specialist determined he suffered micro-burns to his right eye's cornea. His injury kept him from returning to work for 36 days.



Why did this happen?

- Operator failed to turn off the pump, and properly isolate it prior to interacting
- Operator failed to wear required eye protection (goggles) in the work area

Related essentials / Directives / Procedures:

- PPE procedure

Lesson learned and follow-up for each site

- The incident was discussed during Safety Training, specifically to never interact with any equipment that is potentially harbouring a hazardous energy
- While proper PPE would have averted this incident, the pump area was modified to prevent casual contact by relocating the pump to an elevated spot

For further information please contact:

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