



Dangerous Goods Safety Bulletin No. 0111

Date: 29 August 2011

Subject: Unsafe disposal of dangerous goods drums

Hazard

Two people have died recently in Western Australia and another was seriously injured when using angle grinders to cut up 205-litre drums previously used to store dangerous goods. In each incident, sparks from the angle grinder had ignited residual flammable liquid inside the drum, causing an explosion.

The two work-related incidents are described in *WorkSafe Safety Alert 2/2011 Cutting metal drums with an angle grinder*, available at www.worksafe.wa.gov.au

Requirements

It is an offence to dispose of a dangerous goods container unless it has been thoroughly cleaned and made free from dangerous goods. It is also an offence to supply dangerous goods in a container that is not properly labelled.

Recommendations

Establishments wanting to sell drums previously used for dangerous goods (e.g. motor repair shops) should:

- ensure that there are no residual chemicals in them; and
- remove the dangerous goods label.

Drums that have not been cleaned must be properly labeled and a material safety data sheet (MSDS) for the substance concerned available if requested by a buyer.

Buyers of drums should ensure that they only purchase drums that:

- have been thoroughly cleaned; and
- do not have a dangerous goods label.

If there is any doubt, they should not buy the drum.

Equally, if there is any doubt about the drum contents then angle grinders and other heat- or spark-producing equipment should not be used to cut the drum.

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