

DSE Safety Alert



Safety Alert Title: Matches – Unintended ignition
This alert has been issued because a serious incident has occurred that may have risk implications elsewhere in DSE. This alert should be circulated throughout your local area to ensure that employees are aware and implement strategies to manage risk.
Safety Alert Number: 05/08
Date of Incident: 19 November 2008
Incident: An employee received a burn from larger “Easy Strike” matches igniting in the trouser pocket.
Investigation and Findings: <p>The task did not require the use of matches, but they were placed in the pocket from an earlier fire activity at the time of changing out of the firefighter garments.</p> <p>The cause was found to be 2 loose matches igniting against the striker pad of a matchbox in the bottom of the pocket. There was no external heat or force. There was also a full box of matches in the pocket that did not ignite.</p> <p>The employee reduced the severity of the burn by quickly removing the smouldering trousers and cooling the skin with water. Consequently the burn injury was not severe.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Risk is that any loose matches, regardless of their size, are potentially dangerous, particularly if they inadvertently come into contact with a matchbox striker pad. <p>Action: All managers are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure that relevant persons are aware of the risk, and undertake the actions outlined in this Safety Alert.• Reinforce the current practice encouraging all firefighters to carry a box of larger matches for fireline use, including burning out small sections of unburnt fuels adjacent to the control line. <p>Actions to be taken by staff to manage the risk are:</p> <p>Handling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Under NO circumstances are loose matches or crushed or broken matchboxes to be placed in your pocket or a bag or a vehicle. Matches must always be retained in the matchbox provided by the manufacturer and handled according to their instructions.• The best pockets for carrying matches are in the upper part of the firefighting garment as these are unlikely to be squashed.• For extended lighting patterns a quantity of matches should be carried in a small shoulder bag – this is a long established and safe practice.• Be aware that persons travelling by aircraft (eg. firefighters to the fireline by helicopter) are limited to one box (manufacturers) of matches in their pocket.• Additional quantities of matches must be declared to the pilot and transported in approved containers. <p>Storage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Larger matches issued to firefighters that burn much hotter and longer than normal matches are not to be used for any other purpose – they must be kept with that person’s fire kit or stored in the firefighting vehicle.
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