

SAFETY ALERT

Risks associated with cleaning beer lines

The purpose of this safety alert is to remind business owners and workers to take care when cleaning beer lines.

Background

WorkCover NSW was recently notified of an incident where a worker received burns to the face, permanent loss of vision in one eye, and significant impairment in the other, after being splashed with beer line cleaning chemicals.

The process for cleaning the beer lines was to de-gas an empty keg and fill it with a mixture of commercial beer line cleaner, which had been diluted in water. The keg was then connected to the beer delivery system and used to flush the lines clean.

The worker attempted to pour undiluted beer line cleaner into a keg using a funnel connected to a keg coupler. The keg was still pressurised and as the worker depressed the coupler handle, the beer line cleaner was blown back out of the funnel, splashing onto the worker's face and eyes.

Contributing factors

Although experienced in beer line cleaning, the worker was not wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) and may not have understood the potential risks of working with beer line cleaning chemicals.

The beer line cleaner used by the worker consisted of two liquids which are diluted in water and mixed together for use. The safety data sheet (SDS) for one of the liquids specifies that it can cause severe burns if it comes into contact with the skin and eyes, and recommends the use of protective clothing, boots, gloves and eye/face protection when in use.

Action required

Business owners and workers should review their current systems of work and the level of training provided to workers who are responsible for the cleaning of beer lines. If they are not appropriate, improvements should be made immediately.

When reviewing current systems of work for beer line cleaning, business owners and workers should:

- Ensure the beer line cleaning system is the most appropriate for the delivery system used – ie there are two possible methods for cleaning beer lines. One option is the 'static pot', where beer lines are filled with cleaning products using a pump or pressurised gas, and left to soak for a period of time. The other option is 'recirculating', where a pump is used to continuously circulate the cleaning product through beer lines that have been connected into an endless loop. The static pot method, which was used in this case, should only be used when other methods are not practical.
- Ensure the handling and storage of chemicals is in accordance with manufacturer/supplier recommendations and the instructions provided on the SDS.
- Provide appropriate PPE such as long sleeves/pants, enclosed shoes, aprons, gloves, eyewear or face shields and train workers in how to use them correctly.
- Provide appropriate first aid equipment, advice and assistance – eg eye wash and shower facilities, easy access to emergency contact numbers and avoid working alone.

Should an incident occur where a worker does come into contact with hazardous beer line cleaning chemicals, follow the first aid instructions listed in the SDS. This may include rinsing the skin or eyes with fresh water for an extended period of time and contacting emergency services to seek further first aid advice.

More information

- Call WorkCover on **13 10 50** or visit workcover.nsw.gov.au where you will find the:
 - *How to manage work health and safety risks code of practice* (catalogue no. WC03565).
- Visit safeworkaustralia.gov.au where you will find the:
 - *Managing risks of hazardous chemicals in the workplace code of practice*
 - *First aid in the workplace code of practice*.

This alert contains safety information following inquiries made by WorkCover about an incident or unsafe practice. The information contained in this alert does not necessarily include the outcome of WorkCover's response to an incident or unsafe practice. WorkCover does not warrant that the information in this alert is complete or up-to-date and does not accept any liability to any person because of the alert's information or its use.

Disclaimer

This publication may contain work health and safety and workers compensation information. It may include some of your obligations under the various legislations that WorkCover NSW administers. To ensure you comply with your legal obligations you must refer to the appropriate legislation.

Information on the latest laws can be checked by visiting the NSW legislation website legislation.nsw.gov.au

This publication does not represent a comprehensive statement of the law as it applies to particular problems or to individuals or as a substitute for legal advice. You should seek independent legal advice if you need assistance on the application of the law to your situation.

©WorkCover NSW