

WHAT HAPPENED?

During the inspection of a facility, an eyewash bottle was observed sitting on the ground near an air compressor. One of the inspectors picked up the eyewash bottle to put it back in the eyewash cabinet, but there was already one in the cabinet. The inspector smelt something odd and sniffed the eyewash bottle and discovered it contained methanol. Upon further investigation it was discovered that a worker had placed methanol in the bottle to squirt into their air system to keep the lines from freezing in the extremely cold temperatures.



WHAT DID/COULD HAVE WENT WRONG?

Had someone flushed their eye and used this eyewash bottle, the individual could have lost their eyesight. Methanol is particularly toxic to the optic nerve and even at low dose levels, pure methanol might result in a lethal dose or result in blindness as a clinical symptom.

KEY LESSON FROM INCIDENT

Facility inspections are a vital component in a safety management system and are structured in a way that proactively examines areas of the business on a regular basis for opportunities for improvements. Had this organization not performed regular inspections of their facility, this eyewash bottle could have gone undetected and resulted in a tragic eye injury.

Other key lesson in this event was that there was a lack of generic WHMIS training, which would have communicated the hazards associated of not using a workplace label and not having site-specific WHMIS training on the safety data sheet (SDS) for methanol use.

Members are encouraged to contact MSA for a free facility inspection and to take advantage of MSA online WHMIS training.

