

Failure to correctly follow hot work procedures results in fire whilst decommissioning plant

WHAT HAPPENED

During the removal of equipment from decommissioned plant a fire occurred.

The work was being carried out using a cutting torch when sparks ignited the highly flammable Linatex lined pipes and caught fire emitting large clouds of black smoke. The alarm was raised, and the fire was quickly extinguished with no person having sustained injury and with minor property damage. Additional controls were put in place before work re-commenced.

Risk Assessment and SOP had been carried out and communicated to all staff involved prior to work commencing.

KEY FINDINGS

The investigation into this incident highlighted the following failings:

- The work process had changed shortly after work commenced – Dynamic Risk Assessment was not documented.
- A Hot Work permit was issued only after the work process had changed even though the Risk Assessment stated that a Hot Work Permit was required for this work before the change.
- The Hot Work permit had been signed and ticked stating that the area had been checked for combustible materials – this was not the case.
- The fire extinguisher was not checked for suitability.

LEARNING POINTS / ACTIONS TAKEN

This incident may have been prevented if.

- The Hot Work permit had been treated as a serious document and not a tick box exercise
- The risk assessment had been fully adhered to.

LOCATION: QUARRY
ACTIVITY: MAINTENANCE & HOUSEKEEPING
SUB ACTIVITY: ASPHALT & COATED STONE

ALERT STATUS: High Potential
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