

Operational Alerts inform Signal Mutual Members of serious incidents within the Mutual which resulted in permanent disability, death or a significant near miss. If you have similar operations, please share this Operational Alert with operation managers, supervisors, equipment operators, and all affected employees. It is imperative that management, at all levels review their operations for similar hazardous conditions, or acts and their controls.

### Flash Fire Inside Diesel Tank

#### SUMMARY

While removing a deck plate inside a tanker diesel tank, a small amount of material leaked from a drain line resulting in a flash fire.

#### RECENT INCIDENT

Workers were assigned to remove and replace a 16' x 9" section of deck plate adjacent to the bulkhead inside the diesel tank of a chemical tanker.

The diesel tank had been cleaned, lines isolated and blown, and the Marine Chemist Certificate was issued accordingly after the inspection and atmospheric testing of the diesel tank and the void space below.

The intake of a ½" drain line used to drain water from the bottom of the diesel tank was directly over the section of plate that was being removed.



As the worker manipulated the pipe to cut the deck plate directly underneath, a small amount (exact quantity unknown) of liquid leaked out of the intake to the void space below. The worker and ship's crew on-site assumed it was condensation and hot work was continued.

As the worker continued torch cutting, sparks and slag fell into the void and ignited the material. A Fire Watch was on duty and immediately extinguished the fire. No injury or damage occurred.

#### CONSIDERATIONS

Suspected that either the isolation valve had a slow leak or residual material trapped in a low spot of the pipeline was discharged when the worker moved the line to gain access to the plate below. Personnel involved made a false assumption rather than contacting the supervisor or Shipboard Competent Person (SCP) for verification. In addition to isolating valves, consider blocking open end of pipes (intake or outflow) with plugs, caps, or other similar methods where applicable in hot work areas. Be sure to discuss the entire processes, such as "run back" during the JHA or safety talk. Any time there is "run back", the space should be exited and retested by the SCP due to a potential change in atmospheric conditions.



Pneumatic Plug

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