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Safety Alerts

December 19, 2023

Safety Alert: Gas Cutting Torches

According to the FAMES data base, 3 fatalities have involved gas cutting torches. The most recent fatality on November 5, 2022, occurred when oxy/fuel gases exploded in a compartment housing the cutting torch and hoses of the welding truck. Sparks from a rail saw apparently entered the truck compartment and ignited the gases.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the railroads have standards in place when storing, transporting, and working with gas cylinders used with cutting torches. Reference OSHA regulations §1926.350 Gas Welding and Cutting, Subpart Q – Welding, Cutting and Brazing sections §1910.252 General Requirements and §1910.253 Oxygen-fuel gas welding and cutting.

Key recommendations to prevent these types of incidents include:

- Ensure all gas cylinders, hoses and torches are stored in a well-ventilated location.
- Before use perform a leak test away from any ignition source on the gas cutting apparatus, to include all connection points from the valves, regulators, hoses, torch, etc....
- Ensure the proper use of check valves and/or flash-back arresting valves when required.
- When using a rail saw, cutting torch, rail grinder or other tools that produce sparks, ensure the sparks are properly shielded and not thrown in the direction of gas cylinders/cutting apparatus or any other ignition source.
- When completed with the gas cutting apparatus ensure valves on the gas cylinders are closed, hoses are purged of any residue gases and valves on the torch are closed.
- When transporting gas cylinders ensure that approved safety caps are in place on all cylinder valves and are secured in an approved transporting mechanism.

To read more about the FAMES Committee recommendations, check out the FAMES website at: <https://railroads.dot.gov/divisions/partnerships-programs/fatality-analysis-maintenance-way-employees-and-signalmen-fames>

Dedication: *The FAMES Committee dedicates its efforts to all roadway workers who have lost their lives in the performance of duty and to the families, loved ones, and coworkers they have left behind.*

Mission Statement: *The Mission of the Fatality Analysis of Maintenance-of-way Employees and Signalmen (FAMES) Committee is to analyze all fatalities and selected related incidents in order to make recommendations to reduce the risk of future occurrences and eliminate fatalities to roadway workers.*