



# SAFETY ALERT!

## Fire and explosions

The purpose of this safety alert is to enlighten employers and employees about the risk and consequences associated with fire and explosions.

## Background

MAKROSAFE clients reported **11** incidents last year where employees got injured due to a fire or explosion in the workplace. Employers in total lost **71** days of productivity which cost them an amount of **R 27,832.00** altogether.

One employee was busy servicing an aircraft when the battery shorted against a hydraulic pipe and created a fire. The employee was seriously injured in this incident and had to be booked off work. He was off duty for **26** days due to injuries sustained. The cost to the company was **R 10,192.00**.

## Contributing factors

- The battery terminals were exposed.
- The employee didn't inspect the area he was going to work in to see if it was free from anything that could cause an incident before commencement of work.
- The hydraulic pipe was not properly attached to its storage cabin.
- Because the first aid kit was not adequately equipped, injuries sustained were severe and this attributed to the number of days that the employee was booked off work.
- The employee was working in an enclosed area hence it took a while before he could get assistance as his co-workers were not aware that he was trapped inside.
- The fire turned into a chemical fire after it had engulfed chemicals that were stored near the aircraft.

## Action Required

- Employees should check the working environment for any hazards before commencement of work.
- Fire extinguishers should be placed in the vicinity of areas where an explosion or fire is likely to occur.
- The fire extinguishers should be in proper working condition.
- Employers should ensure that machinery likely to cause an explosion is inspected before it is used to ensure that guards are in place and are functional.
- Premises should be clean and organised and equipment must be properly stored so that it doesn't contribute to a hazard or worsen an incident.
- Employers should ensure that employees working in a confined/ enclosed place have suitable means of raising an alarm in case of an emergency. This could be a second employee checking on them constantly, a radio or a panic button.
- Employers should ensure adequately equipped first aid boxes are available in the vicinity of employees work stations as they can help reduce extensive injuries.
- Employees should be drilled to know the immediate action they should take in case a fire starts and how to prevent it from getting out of hand.
- Employees should be encouraged to report anything that they suspect could cause a danger to their lives during their work even if it is not part of their duty.

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