



SAFETY ALERT - #17-2008
INFORMATION ALERT – USE OF BASE OILS (DIESEL) IN HIGH-PRESSURE WASH GUNS

RELEASE DATE: MAY 12, 2008

Page 1 of 2

Function: Drilling	Incident Date: N/A
Location: Onshore	Location Detail: All Field Operations
Incident Type: N/A	Country and Region: Canada, Alberta

Description of Incident:

At their April 1, 2008 meeting, the Enform Safety Council passed a motion that organizations in the Canadian oil and gas industry should prohibit the use of base oils (including diesel) in wash guns on the basis of health and safety.

This motion is referring specifically to diesel and diesel-type fluids. Organizations are strongly encouraged to investigate the ongoing need for this practice, and to develop alternatives or examine substitute products.

This motion came as the result of discussions on the safety and health of workers exposed to diesel from this practice. This is not a new issue, and is:

- covered in regulation ([BC Occupational Safety Regulation 5.32](#))
- mentioned in Industry Recommended Practice 14 ([2004 – Page 43](#))
- covered in previous Enform safety alerts ([#09-2006](#) and [#52-2006](#))

It should be noted that in British Columbia, the Construction Safety Network has dealt with the use of diesel as a degreaser after a diesel vapour ignition caused severe injuries and fatalities. They also investigated alternatives for their use of diesel. Details:

www.safetynetwork.bc.ca/drc.html#issue

Background

Base oils are used in place of water in order to limit the impact on the mud system and sometimes as a degreaser agent. The flammable and volatile nature of diesel, when combined with static electricity from both the wash gun itself and other equipment and personnel, creates a potentially explosive situation.

Prior to any cleaning agent being used in a wash gun (other than those explicitly recommended by the manufacturer) employers need to undertake a hazard assessment on the practice, and include any equipment testing and/or certification considerations.

Employers and employees involved with an operation where diesel is used in wash guns are encouraged to decline working in the environment, unless the regulatory conditions are met.

As part of this process, Enform contracted outside expert resources to review this practice and the implications on health and safety. In preparing this report, it was anecdotally observed that this practice still takes place despite many organizations having a policy in place banning it.

Organizations are strongly encouraged to investigate to determine if their policies are being adhered to. The complete contractor report is available here:

http://www.enform.ca/pdf/review_of_diesel_use_2008.pdf



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PAGE 2 OF 2

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This Safety Alert is designed to prevent similar incidents by communicating the information at the earliest possible opportunity. Accordingly, the information may change over time. It may be necessary to obtain updates from the source before relying upon the accuracy of the information contained herein. This material is presented for information purposes only. Managers and supervisors should evaluate this information to determine if it can be applied to their own situations and practices.