

Researcher Splashes Nitric Acid on Face

A researcher was adding a few drops of concentrated nitric acid to test tubes containing samples. The dropper bottle containing the acid broke apart and approximately 30 milliliters of nitric acid splashed on the researcher's face and spilled on the bench top. The researcher immediately rinsed her face in an eye wash, while others in the laboratory contacted 911, obtained the MSDS and took initial steps to contain and clean up the spilled material. The researcher rinsed her face in the eye wash for approximately 15 minutes. The researcher was then taken to a shower, where she was able to fully decontaminate her hair and neck and change into clean clothing. The researcher was transported to the Christiana Hospital, by ambulance, for treatment. The researcher was wearing chemical protective gloves, a laboratory coat and prescription glasses but was not wearing safety glasses.

Lessons Learned

1. Laboratory personnel should always wear all proper personal protective equipment to include:
 - a. Long pants or skirts that come below the knees
 - b. Closed Toe Shoes
 - c. Laboratory Coat
 - d. Safety Glasses or Goggles
 - e. Face/Splash Shields when necessary
 - f. Chemical Protective Gloves
2. All work involving volatile, corrosive and/or toxic chemicals should be completed in a properly operating fume hood. Researchers should position the fume hood sash so their face is protected from any splash, spray or explosion.
3. The integrity of all chemical bottles and containers should be assessed on a periodic basis. Compromised or damaged containers must be replaced. Check labels and replace or repair as necessary.