Hazard Alert: Scald by Pressure Release

Intended audience: Laboratory Principal Investigators and Personnel

Incident summary
A high pressure release of a 121°C liquid caused a facial scald. An ampoule within a thermal analyzer over-pressurized unexpectedly, detached from its loading mechanism and ultimately ruptured upon attempted removal.

Investigation Findings
• Routine experiment with unexpected outcome
• Unplanned change in routine practice introduced a new hazard (pressurized ampoule)
• New hazard was not realized

Actions Taken
• Manufacturer user guides reviewed
• Procedure written to standardize process and call attention to potential hazard

Key Takeaways
• PPE works! Lab coat, gloves and safety glasses prevented serious injury.
• When there is a change to routine practice – press pause and reassess for a change in hazard.
• Manufacturer user guides may be a useful source of safety-related information.

Additional Resources:
Environment, Health & Safety webpage:
• Lab Safety Program
  • Standard Operating Procedures Standard
  • Standard Operating Procedures Template
• Personal Protective Equipment Program