

UK Safety Alert

Propane Heating Torch Incident

Details of the Incident

A Quarry Fitter recently received burns to his hand and index finger following an incident when using an oxy propane pre heating blowpipe. The blowpipe was fitted with a propane pre heating nozzle (often colloquially known as a pepper pot nozzle). The Fitter was using the torch to heat up a crusher door to make it malleable enough to allow straightening. During the operation the equipment malfunctioned, possibly due to a nozzle blockage, causing the nozzle to glow red, which it is believed resulted in a blow back rupture at the blowpipe connection. The injured person was wearing gloves; however they were inappropriate for the task as the flame burnt through them.



Pre heating
blowpipe
fitted with a
bespoke
nozzle rose
similar to this

Learning Points

Propane heating torches of various types are used for a variety of tasks, such as pre / post heating, weed removal and, crucially in cold conditions, to heat frozen pipes. We must take extreme care as certain types can generate temperatures in excess of 2,000 degree Fahrenheit. Only suitably trained and authorised persons should use heating torches and oxy fuel heating equipment.

- Ensure pre job risk assessments identify possible hazards such as **confined spaces, working at height, hazardous fume emissions** due to coatings and **manual handling**. Never proceed unless the hazards are sufficiently controlled.
- Always **inspect** all the hoses, the safety device fittings, the valves and all the connections before lighting the propane torch.
- **Never leave the operational equipment unattended**, under any conditions.
- Always make sure that the torch is never pointed at anyone.
- When you are finished using the torch, turn off the gas and make sure to burn off all the remaining propane from the hose.
- Never use a torch near combustible materials such as wooden decking, sources of fuel or linax rubber (**unless under strict hot work permit conditions**).
- Always wear the appropriate PPE. Task specific PPE risk assessments should be consulted.
- Monitor the work area for at least one hour after you have used a propane torch for any signs of smoldering and hot spots, and sign off the hot work permit
- Consult your safe systems for use and storage of oxy fuel equipment.
- Never use a match or a lighter to ignite the flame. Always use a spark lighter.