

SAFETY ALERT

ARTC NSW No. 28**Issued 25/1/08**

METAL DRUMS

On the 6/1/08 an apprentice was using an angle grinder to cut open a metal drum when the drum exploded. This incident did not happen in the Rail Industry.

The apprentice was left with serious burns to his hands, arms and legs. He needed to be flown to Sydney's Royal North Shore hospital for treatment.

A Workcover spokesman indicated that it appeared the explosion was caused by sparks from the angle grinder igniting vapours from thinners, which had been stored in the drum.

The Workcover spokesman advised that there had been similar incidents of this nature over the years, with some people being killed.

The cutting of metal drums with angle grinders is an extremely dangerous procedure, whether it is at work or at home.

Any person considering the cutting of a metal drum with an angle grinder or any other cutting device should take the following safeguards:

- Find out what the drum contained
- Remove any stoppers or "bungs" to release any vapours
- Use detergent and water to thoroughly rinse the drum prior to cutting

ACTION TO BE TAKEN

- Advise all employees under your control of this Safety Alert.
- Place the Safety Alert on display
- Ensure a "sign-off" (for example, a Team Safety Meeting record) is obtained to verify that employees have been briefed on this Safety Alert.