



Media Release - SafeWork SA

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WARNING OVER FUMES HAZARD

The dangers of working with chemicals in enclosed spaces have been highlighted in another case before the South Australian Industrial Relations Court today.

Cromatec Electro-Plating Pty Ltd, a family business based at Melrose Park was convicted and fined \$20,000 today over an incident two years ago in which a worker collapsed after inhaling chemical vapours inside an industrial degreasing tank that he was cleaning.

The company pleaded guilty to breaching section 19 of the *Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Act 1986*, in failing to ensure that an employee was safe from injury and risks to health while at work.

SafeWork SA's investigators found the company had:

- failed to provide information, instruction, training and supervision on how to safely perform the task involved; and
- failed to provide and maintain safe systems of work.

On 22 April 2005, the 53 year old process worker was found collapsed inside the large tank due to the effects of trichloroethylene. He returned to work the next day, but was treated for acute asthma over the next 12 months.

The case is similar to an incident in January 2006, in which SafeWork SA prosecuted Topline Paints Pty Ltd over an incident at Lonsdale, in which workers were overcome by chemicals while cleaning inside a large paint-mixing tank.

"The use of chemicals in enclosed spaces is a deadly business," says SafeWork SA Executive Director, Michele Patterson.

"As we've seen in both of these cases, the aggregation of fumes is an ever-present and lethal hazard, but one that can be easily anticipated in the hazard identification and risk assessment process.

"The Magistrate in today's case referred to the existing Australian Standard for cleaning procedures, and it is the legal duty of all employers in such industries to be aware of this Standard and put it to use.

"There is a wealth of information and resources available from SafeWork SA, Business SA and other occupational health and safety professionals to assist in this process," Ms. Patterson says.

For answers and advice on workplace health and safety and the relevant laws, SafeWork SA operates a telephone Help Centre on 1 300 365 255 or 8303 0400. To report serious accidents or incidents, in the workplace call 1 800 777 209