



Explosion at Fish and Chip Café



INCIDENT

A Fish and Chip Café was subject to an explosion and extensively damaged following a gas leak from a poorly maintained gas supply line. The gas was ignited by a cycling chest freezer. As a result of the explosion the café's structural integrity was compromised and it had to be demolished and re-built.

The café owner was standing at the epicentre of the blast and suffered extensive burns to his face and arms as a result of the explosion, requiring special care at Hutt Hospital plastics unit.

CIRCUMSTANCES

- The café had no system in place to ensure the regular on-going maintenance of gas or electrical equipment.
- Failed gas supply lines had slowly degraded over time through movement and no regular maintenance.
- The owners were previously alerted to the smell of gas but had failed to engage a suitably qualified person to identify the source of possible leaks.
- Anomalies with the Gasfitting Certification Certificate could have potentially alerted owners to substandard workmanship.

No maintenance and servicing information was provided to the owner on installation of the appliances.

INVESTIGATION

- The investigation highlighted that the primary cause of the explosion can be attributed to lack of appliance maintenance and the degradation of the appliance and fittings over time.
- The café now has a system in place to ensure the regular cleaning and maintenance of gas and electrical equipment by a suitably qualified person to ensure it remains safe to operate.
- As a result of this accident the café owners now have a greater appreciation of Workplace Health and Safety.

GUIDANCE

Electricity Safety

- Always ensure that your electrical equipment is maintained in good working order.
- Checks should be conducted on all electrical equipment by a competent person to AS/NZS 3760:2001.
- Checks should include portable devices, extension cords and multi boxes.

- Ensure you have a system for ensuring these checks are conducted on a regular basis.

If you engage an electrician to do work for you that involves any wiring work they must issue you with a Certificate of Compliance. This shows that the work has been completed by a licensed electrician, meets safety standards set by law and has been tested.

Gas Safety

- Gas appliances need regular checking, servicing and maintenance.
- Have this work conducted in accordance with the manufacturers or retailers instructions by a craftsman gasfitter or a qualified service technician.
- If you smell gas, or are alerted to the smell of gas, ensure it is switched off immediately and engage a suitably qualified person to check your entire system thoroughly.
- Remember that un-flued gas appliances, especially gas fired patio heaters, can produce carbon monoxide in lethal quantities; ensure the area is well ventilated when they are in use.

If you have recently been connected with gas or have installed a new gas appliance, you should have been provided with a Gasfitting Certification Certificate by a Registered Craftsman Gasfitter. This Certificate is a legal requirement, and gives details of the work carried out and indicates that the appliance or gas installation has been tested and is safe to use.

Further information on gas and electricity safety can be found here www.osh.govt.nz, www.energysafety.govt.nz or www.ermanz.govt.nz. You can also call 0800 20 90 20 to seek further advice from the Department of Labour.

Note: This material has been prepared using the best information available to the Department of Labour at the time of publication. Information may change over time and it may be necessary for you to obtain an update. This material is also only intended to provide general advice and does not constitute legal advice. You should make your own judgement about action you may need to take to ensure you have complied with your workplace health and safety obligations under the law.

WHICH INDUSTRIES/SECTORS OR MATTERS WILL THIS INFORMATION BE RELEVANT TO?

Hospitality and Retail Industries. LPG/Gas Safety, Carbon Monoxide Poisoning