

A Blast You'll Never Forget

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You wouldn't gargle with gasoline, nor brush your teeth with turpentine, so why would you use your mouth to siphon hazmat? Don't laugh, because that's what a young Sailor did.

He was cleaning bilges in a machinery space when he decided he needed some Blastoff, which is used to clean flight decks. After finding a shipmate from the division that controlled this substance, he asked about getting a small amount of it.

The shipmate told him that Blastoff usually is stored in 55-gallon drums, and that he would have to use a siphon to transfer some of the cleaner to a smaller container. When the Sailor found the drum, he saw a hose sticking out of it and mistakenly figured he orally had to siphon the solution. He didn't realize the shipmate had intended for him to use a pump attached to the hose.

When all was said and done, the Sailor had swallowed enough of the "hazmat cocktail" to burn his throat and stomach. He had to report to sick bay for treatment.

What caused this mishap?

- The Sailor didn't get the hazmat from the right source. He should have gone to his ship's hazmin center.



- He didn't use the right equipment for transferring the hazmat. Never use your mouth to start a siphon.

How do you avoid recurrences? Hold refresher training in each division, particularly with young, newly reporting personnel. It won't hurt to remind all hands from time to time about the dangers of the blast they can get from a "hazmat cocktail." ☺

The author was assigned to the Naval Safety Center when he wrote this article. Send comments or questions on the article to afloat@safetycenter.navy.mil.