

Friday 25 July 2014

BLINDING INJURIES FROM CLEANING BEER LINES

A Sydney-Sydney Eye Hospital (SSEH) specialist has warned people who clean beer lines need to wear eye and face protection when handling alkaline chemicals after seeing a continuing trend of serious injuries.

Clinical Professor Stephanie Watson is concerned by the severity of alkali burns to the eyes and face which could easily be prevented.

“We see a new alkali related eye injury about once a month. The most serious are associated with beer line cleaners,” Professor Watson said.

“The combination of an alkaline solution, high pressure and lack of eye protection when cleaning beer lines results in devastating injuries.”

A 25 year old man from Port Macquarie is one year into recovery following alkali related eye burns.

Macleay Borger lost all vision in his left eye and has limited vision in his right after a beer line cleaner was ejected into his eyes and face.

He has undergone more than 10 bouts of surgery including dermabrasion, skin grafts and amniotic stem cell membrane transplants however is still unable to drive or return to work.

Mr Borger said he didn't realise the danger associated with using Potassium Hydroxide when working at a bar.

“People understand the importance of being careful when lifting something heavy but often don't take the same approach when handling dangerous chemicals,” he said.

“I spent months recovering at the Sydney Eye Hospital since the injury but life has changed drastically since the injury.”

Using wrap around eye and face protection in these cases would prevent the extensive damage caused by cleaning solutions.

Professor Watson published a letter to the editor in the latest edition of the Medical Journal of Australia where she has called for the introduction of mandatory safety guidelines.

“I strongly advise people cleaning beer lines to wear full face and eye protection,” Professor Watson added.

Ends

Media note: there is a media opportunity at 1pm on Monday 28 July with Professor Watson and Macleay Borger. For interviews please phone Joel Penson on 0428 628 722.

Media contacts:

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District: Joel Penson 0428 628 722 or 0409 973 612.