



Media release

LPG cold burn while refueling a car: doctors warn of danger

The increasing use of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) may result in increasing numbers of burn injuries, as most people are unaware of the dangers and of appropriate first aid.

This is the message of a case report published in the latest issue of *Emergency Medicine Australasia*, the journal of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine.

LPG is a fuel obtained from crude oil during petroleum processing and is a mixture of commercial butane and propane gases.

It is used extensively for domestic, agricultural, and industrial purposes, with Australia's production expected to increase by 50% in the next 10 years.

Although the risk of injury because of ignition or explosion of LPG is well recognized, there have been only a few reports of cold burns related to LPG exposure.

This is the first Australian case of LPG cold burns to be reported in the medical literature.

Dr Bronwyn Scarr (Intern), Dr Biswadev Mitra (Consultant Emergency Physician), Dr Amit Maini, (Registrar in Emergency Medicine), and Heather Cleland (Director of Victorian Adult Burns Service) described the case of a 38-year-old woman who was refueling her car when LPG splashed onto her right hand, causing immediate pain and reduced sensation.

Cold running water was applied for 20 minutes as first aid at the scene.

She was treated at her local hospital and then transferred to a specialist burns unit.

The authors said that industrial standards mandate personal protective equipment be worn at all times when handling LPG liquid.

Typical precautions include gauntlet type neoprene gloves, goggles or face visor, long sleeved cotton overalls and safety boots or shoes.

There are no similar standards in place for handling of LPG in non-industrial settings.

The authors said this case highlights the need for continuing safety surveillance as well as awareness of hospital transfer guidelines.

They recommend education regarding appropriate first aid to users of LPG and paramedics as well as rigorous surveillance of adverse events.

An increase in adverse events may require a revision of safety standards for the commercial use of LPG, they say.

Issued for the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine by Marilyn Bitomsky, phone 07 3371 3057 or 0412 884 114