



Petroleum Safety Significant Incident Report No. 04/2013

Overused and poorly maintained generator catches fire

Incident

An electrical supervisor conducting a walkabout after a pre-start noticed smoke and heard a strange noise coming from a generator. Assuming it could be running out of fuel, he lifted the access cover and discovered a small fire had started around the crankcase of the engine. He immediately shut it down and deployed a near-by fire extinguisher. When the fire was out and the appliance had cooled down, he disconnected the battery terminals to prevent accidental start-up, and fitted an out-of-service tag to the generator. An out-of-service tag was also fitted to the spent fire extinguisher to prevent re-use.

This incident had the potential to escalate had it remained undetected.

Contributory factors

- The service and maintenance history for this generator was inadequate, although it was one of the oldest on site.
- The generator had been used overnight to run a freezer. This extended running period caused the engine block to fail, releasing oil which ignited. The pre-start checks for mobilised equipment were inadequate.

Preventative actions

- Maintain and service equipment to keep it in good condition.
- Regularly inspect equipment. Implement and review pre-mobilisation policies and procedures, and ensure all equipment has a fit-for-purpose pre-start checklist.
- Prior to mobilisation, check that equipment is fit for purpose.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Gooch'.

Alan Gooch
DIRECTOR PETROLEUM SAFETY
16 May 2013