Interagency Aviation

Safety Alert

No. 10-01   Date: February 24, 2010   Page 1 of 1

Subject: Defective PremoFire/Vanguard Plastic Spheres

Area of Concern: Plastic Sphere Dispensing Operations

Distribution: Helicopter Operations

Discussion: There have been several instances where the PremoFire/Vanguard Plastic spheres have jammed the Plastic Sphere Dispenser (PSD), caused excessive permanganate residue in the chutes, and could increase the chance of a fire in the PSD machine. See SAFECOM 10-0077 and SAFECOM 10-0081.

The spheres are cracking at the weld or seam joint allowing the permanganate to release into the PSD machine. The loose permanganate from the cracked and broken spheres are causing the PSD machine to get gummed up and jam well before the recommended cleaning time. The pilots, PSD operators and ignition specialists have also reported getting the powder in their eyes.

The manufacturer, PremoFire/Vanguard Plastics are working with the sites that have identified problems. The suspect spheres were manufactured between June and November 2009, but may not be limited to those exact dates.

Gummed up PSD machine after approximately 3,000 spheres were dispensed

Recommendations:

1. Check all inventory for sphere manufactured in 2009 by PremoFire/Vanguard Plastics. If any boxes of the suspect spheres are discovered contact your Regional /State Helicopter Operations Specialist, Agency Aerial Ignition Representative **and** PremoFire at 604-513-4481 or 877-903-1475.
2. Examine boxes prior to use/loading for broken spheres or loose permanganate, if excessive amounts found discontinue use of that particular box of spheres.
3. Maintain the cleanliness and preventative maintenance of the PSD machine per instructions in the Interagency Aerial Ignition Guide.
4. Review Interagency Lessons Learned 10-03 Foreign Object Debris in PSD.

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