



Two Accidents Involving Flicking of Copper(II) Sulphate onto the Eyes

The above accidents occurred during Science practical lessons. One of the accidents occurred when a student was conducting an experiment to study the phenomenon of dissolving. When the student tried to deliver some copper(II) sulphate from a plastic vial into a beaker of water using a small plastic spoon, he carelessly dropped the plastic spoon onto the movable bench. Some copper(II) sulphate in the dropping spoon rebounded from the bench and got into the student's left eye. Another laboratory accident occurred in an experiment studying the growth of copper(II) sulphate crystals from its saturated solution. When a student tried to take out a piece of crystallized copper(II) sulphate from the plastic container to observe at eye level, some copper(II) sulphate got into his left eye. In these two accidents, the teachers promptly helped the students to rinse their eyes with plenty of clean water. The students involved in the accidents were taken to hospitals for medical treatment. No significant injury was found.



It was obvious that the two experiments were relatively safe and involved no dangerous chemicals. As a result, teachers and students may be less alert to any potential hazards of the practical work. Science teachers should learn from the accidents of the importance of using personal protective equipment during practical work. In fact, the accidents could have been avoided if the students had worn safety spectacles during the practical work.

In order to avoid similar laboratory accidents happening in the future, science teachers are requested to note the following:

1. Students should be asked to wear safety spectacles whenever any operation with chemicals is performed.
2. Appropriate hazard warning labels should be stuck on reagent bottles containing chemicals available to students.
3. Before doing any practical work in the laboratory, students should be reminded of the potential hazards of the practical work and the importance of handling chemicals with care.

Science teachers should also note that all eye accidents should be treated as serious accidents. Medical advice should be sought at once in case an eye accident occurs and a written report should be sent to the Education Department using the standard format provided in Appendix D of the Schools Miscellaneous Circular "Safety in School Laboratories".

