Static Spark Sets Off Fatal Flash Fire

A worker died in a flash fire which occurred when a static spark ignited solvent vapors on top of a large blending tank in a manufacturing plant. The spark, which was either from his clothing or from metal striking metal, set off the highly volatile vapors from a solvent being used to dissolve nitrocellulose, a substance which burns very hot and fast.

The coroner recommended that employers and employees become better educated in the uses and handling of hazardous materials. He also recommended that workers use the proper clothing when handling hazardous materials, in this case clothing made of material less likely to gather a static charge. It is imperative for anyone who works around flammable liquids to fully understand the dangers of static electricity, and follow the safe procedures to the letter.