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Keeping workers safe from hazards

The use of lithium batteries today is twice a prevalent as it was in the early 90s. The batteries, known for providing long-lasting energy to power thousands of devices, were originally developed for military purposes in the 1970s. The commercial use of lithium batteries lies in powering devices like cell phones, toys, watches, and laptops. They are also used in certain medical devices such as pacemakers.

The voltages produced by lithium batteries range greatly. With the capability to produce a staggering amount of energy, there is a large market for lithium batteries in the oil industry. Many tools used for directional drilling, such as EM downhole tools, positive and negative pulse tools, and at-bit inclination drilling tools, require lithium batteries to operate.

Lithium batteries used in these tools, however, are different than those used in our remote controls and fire alarms. The oil industry uses Lithium Thionyl Chloride batteries which, while producing higher energy output, also present greater risks to those using them.

Lithium batteries are very safe when used and treated properly. However, if they are mistreated, the results can be devastating. The batteries provide extremely high currents and can discharge rapidly when short circuited. Overheating, ruptures, and even explosions can occur.

In some cases, a ruptured battery can lead to the venting of toxic fumes. A forced discharge or mechanical shock from a malfunctioning battery can result in severe burns to anyone not wearing the proper protective equipment. In the event of fires caused by an explosion, only Lithex fire extinguishers are capable of putting out the flamesâ€”an immediate response with water can be dangerous. After a lithium battery incident, large amounts of hydrochloric acid are produced and particles will remain in the area for an extended period of time making the atmosphere very hazardous to health even once the immediate threat seems to have subsided.

These serious hazards in mind, the Canadian Online Safety Training Association is now offering a lithium battery safety online course. Developed by Safety Coordination Services, the course covers everything from the history of the lithium battery to handling requirements to the dangers prevalent in their exposure.

Ensuring that all workers who transport, handle, or store lithium batteries are fully aware of the hazards presented, and how they can protect themselves from those hazards, is the best way to prevent incidents in the workplace arising from lithium battery use.

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Matthew Albertson is author of this article. To know more about a lithium battery safety training courses, hazard safety training and a whmis online training, please visit a http://www.safetytrainingassociation.com

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