



NEWS RELEASE

Date: April 25, 2008
Release Date: Immediately
Contact: Storm Smith, 503-780-0393 (cell phone)

(One Injured and Businesses Evacuated After Chemical Spill at Dry Cleaners)

At 10:53 am Friday, firefighters were dispatched to reports of a chemical spill at Alpine Dry Cleaners, 17683 SW Farmington Road. The first arriving firefighters were told a contractor servicing a dry cleaning machine in the rear of the business had been accidentally sprayed in the face and chest with a chemical and that an undetermined amount of the product had spilled. Until firefighters could determine the exact chemical involved, the extent of the spill and whether a second chemical might be involved, they evacuated the adjoining four businesses in the building and requested Washington County Sheriff's Deputies assist in establishing a perimeter around the building.

Firefighter/paramedics began evaluating the patient and performing gross decontamination (removing the patient's saturated clothing and rinsing the eyes, nose and mouth). They established a safety zone around the building while treating the patient and worked with Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue's Hazardous Materials Team to determine the chemical properties of the product.

The Hazardous Materials Team determined the chemical to be Tetrachloroethylene, which is a manufactured chemical that is widely used for dry cleaning of fabrics and for metal-degreasing. A common trade name for the chemical is *Perk*. It is also used to make other chemicals and is used in some consumer products. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, "tetrachloroethylene is a nonflammable liquid at room temperature which evaporates easily into the air and has a sharp, sweet odor." It is an irritant to the eyes, nose, mouth and the respiratory system. High concentrations of tetrachloroethylene (particularly in closed, poorly ventilated areas) can cause dizziness, headache, sleepiness, confusion, nausea, difficulty in speaking and walking, unconsciousness, and death.

The adult patient, whose identity is protected by federal patient privacy laws, was transported by Metro West Ambulance to St. Vincent's Medical Center for treatment with nonlife-threatening injuries.

A dry cleaner employee and a customer who were both at the front of the store at the time of the incident escaped unharmed.

Firefighters entered the adjoining businesses with air monitors and determined that three businesses, Great Clips Hair Salon, Amigos Restaurant, and the Goodwill Donation Center, were safe to re-enter at 12:15 pm. A coin-operated laundry next to the dry cleaners was initially reopened, but a short while later was closed again due to odors migrating from next door. Both the laundry and the dry cleaning establishments will remain closed until a commercial chemical clean-up company can respond and clean up the spilled product.

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Photo Caption:

TVF&R Lieutenant Steve Mills places contaminated clothing from a worker accidentally sprayed with a dry cleaning chemical into a container for disposal. Three other firefighters and a safety officer monitor the task.