

## Whoosh bottle alert

**Our colleagues at CLEAPSS reported an incident with this demonstration in the South West of England last year with a whoosh bottle containing methanol.**

Instead of burning with the trademark 'whoosh', it exploded, shattering the bottle and causing minor burns to some young children watching it.

The demonstration was carried out on a warm day and the methanol was left in the bottle for at least 15 minutes before lighting it. The exact cause of the incident is not clear. It may be that there had been some weakening of the plastic - methanol does attack polycarbonate though only slowly. Another possibility is that the demonstrator had been unfortunate enough to create an explosive mixture which then detonated. However, methanol has quite a wide explosive range in air (6% - 37%) so it would seem surprising that such an incident should not have happened before if this is the reason.

Whatever the cause, it is probably best to stick to ethanol and propanol unless there is a good reason for using methanol. Neither of these two alcohols forms explosive mixtures and sticking to them also avoids the problems of toxicity associated with methanol. ◀



## A thank you from SSERC

**At the turn of the year, the Ionising Radiation Regulations changed. It became necessary for employers whose employees were working with sources to register with the Health and Safety Executive.**

In state schools, the council is the employer, so registration took place at local authority level. Independent schools and colleges had to apply individually. SSERC asked each employer to give us the name of a link person to whom we passed on our guidance on registration. Many of those nominated will be bulletin readers, and we would like to thank you for your work in making sure that this fascinating part of the curriculum can continue to be studied in a way that is compliant with legislative demands. ◀

