



# SAFETY ALERT

## Trash Can Fire

RISK MANAGEMENT & SAFETY

**Event:** Trash Can Fire  
**Date:** October 27, 2015  
**Category:** Fire  
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### Description

A small fire started when a potassium-contaminated Kimwipe was discarded into a trash can. There were no injuries and minor property damage. The potassium reacted with water vapor in the air causing the fire. The Kimwipe had been removed from a glove box during cleaning after the experiment was complete. A graduate student put the fire out with a Metal-X fire extinguisher.

### Findings

- Graduate student was cleaning out glove box after working with potassium and did not see the contamination on Kimwipe. The wipe was disposed of in regular trash.
- Graduate student was wearing the proper PPE.
- A second graduate student used Metal-X fire extinguisher to extinguish the fire.
- Fire extinguisher was current with inspections.

### Causes

- Reactive waste was placed in a regular trash receptacle without quenching.
- There was no procedure to quench all waste following removal from the glove box.

### Recommended Actions

- Establish procedure requiring the quenching of all waste removed from glove boxes prior to disposal and inform personnel of this requirement.
- Require that all flammables and waste containers are removed from the hood before quenching is initiated.

### Need additional resources?

For more information regarding laboratory safety, see the Laboratory Safety resources provided on the RMS website <http://riskmanagement.nd.edu/>