



## **Tank explosion in New York City highlights need for safety**

August 07, 2009 - Owners Developers & Managers

A worker suffered burns to over 70% of his body and is in critical condition at Harlem Hospital after the domestic hot water tank he was cleaning exploded. Manuel Culcay, an employee of Acid Waste Management in Yonkers, was using alcohol to clean the tank in a Columbia University owned medical school building in Washington Heights. Two other workers also suffered minor injuries - a second worker injured his arms and hands as he tried to pull Culcay out of the tank and a third worker suffered respiratory injuries.

The explosion occurred on the 22nd floor of 650 West 186th St. and was confined to the room the tank was located. There was no other damage to the building.

The water tank's pipes were being cleaned with a solution containing alcohol. One of the workers turned a halogen lamp on. The intensity of the heat from the lamp combined with the vapors from the solution caused a small explosion and fire, commented a spokesperson from the FDNY.

"This accident brings to light the necessity of hiring qualified professionals to conduct the maintenance and cleaning of the city's wooden or steel water tanks," said Richard Silver, president of American Pipe and Tank, a Long Island City based company that services water tanks and cooling towers.

"There are a lot of different companies out there claiming to be qualified to clean water tanks, but the City of New York is very specific in their requirements: anyone who enters a water tank that is used for potable (drinking) water has to be either licensed as a New York City master plumber or have certification from the New York City Department of Health," said Silver. "Optimally, they should have both."

In addition to being fully licensed, a tank professional is trained to work in confined spaces & adheres to OSHA safety requirements.

New York Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540