METHANOL TANK FIRES

Robert L. Smith, CFEI, CFII
Senior Safety Engineer
Environmental, Health & Safety Department
Ashland, Inc.
5200 Blazer Parkway
Dublin, OH 43017

ABSTRACT

Lightning appears to have a natural attraction for storage tanks containing bulk methanol, principally due to its physical properties. The probability for fire increases based on storage practices and geographic location. Currently, there is no industry-wide fire prevention standard for methanol storage tanks. It is recommended, therefore, that methanol be stored in a floating-roof tank or under an inert gas blanket, with a flame arrestor upstream of the conservation vent as well as tank bonding and grounding. A rigid preventative maintenance program including electrical continuity measurement must be in place for these systems to ensure their integrity.