

Warning on use of methanol (industrial alcohol) for virus disinfection

KOSHA issues danger alert for acute intoxication amid outbreak of methanol cases



KOSHA pleaded with the public to pay close attention not to cause additional damages based on incorrect information concerning COVID-19.

- ✚ ✚ This plea was stemmed from the acute intoxication incident suffered by local residents at Namyangju, Gyeonggi-do after using methanol (industrial alcohol) as preventive measures against COVID-19 on March 7th.
- ✚ ✚ Since substances harmful to human bodies, such as methanol, are prone to cause health hazards upon inadequate applications, extra cautions are essentially required.

It was presumed that this particular case of wrongful use was caused because the vapor of high-concentration methanol remained at indoors after methanol was sprayed for disinfection of the indoor with insufficient ventilation while they were not fully aware of the harmfulness of the substance.

* Situation surrounding the Incident: OOO, a resident of Namyangju, Gyeonggi-do, attempted to disinfect furniture and blankets by mixing methanol and water by the ration of 9 to 1 and spraying the mixture at his/her home on March 7, 2020 (Saturday) for about 10 times, which ignited acute intoxication.

- ✚ ✚ Methanol, a highly-flammable colorless liquid, is a toxic substance which easily irritates eyes and respiratory systems and may cause damages to central nervous system and optic nerves after repeated or long-term exposures.
- ✚ ✚ In early March in Iran, over 40 people were killed after ingesting the home-made disinfectant made of methanol based on unproven rumor of curative effects for COVID-19.

Consequently, KOSHA posted a guideline not to use methanol as disinfectant at workplaces through its official website and SNS, and informs all workplaces handling methanol of the risk warnings.

Eun-a Kim, a Director of OSHRI, KOSHA and a specialist of occupational and environmental medicine, said, "Unfortunate incidents have occurred in recent days due to unidentified and incorrect information related to COVID-19." And she added, "I urge everyone not to employ unproven substances or information, and it is also necessary to practice safe use of legitimate information offered by the government or official organizations."