

Network Rail Briefing - Acid Attacks

Station teams are requested to note this brief in response to the recent rise in Acid Attacks.

An attack could occur within a station area, or persons may present themselves at a station where the attack has occurred nearby.

As with any medical incident, station teams should consider their own safety as a priority and not become a casualty themselves:

- assessing if the threat of attack remains and evacuate people away from the immediate area if necessary
- request the attendance of emergency services
- Self-protection noting the advice given around treatment from the NHS below

Also attached is a one side info sheet to display on notice boards and BTP presentation.

The following advice is from the nhs website:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/2017/08/new-help-for-acid-attack-victims-following-recent-rise-in-demand-for-nhs-help/>

The NHS and leading burns surgeons have issued new first aid guidance to help ensure victims of acid attacks get the right help fast.

The assistance for victims comes as new data from NHS England show the number of people requiring specialist medical help for this type of assault is on the rise. In 2014, 16 people required specialist medical advice, rising to 25 in 2015 and increasing further to 32 last year. The level of demand for specialist burns help so far in 2017 suggests there will be another rise in patient numbers this year.

So-called 'acid attacks', where corrosive substances are used as part of a violent assault or robbery, have become increasingly prominent, with a series of high-profile incidents this year. As well as significant harm caused to individuals, the NHS estimates that the average cost of care for a victim requiring specialist burns treatment, eye care, rehabilitation and mental health treatment is £34,500.

NHS England, in partnership with the British Association of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons (BAPRAS) has publishing new advice for anyone falling victim to acid attacks, including new online guidance and

support to victims as well as friends or family of people affected by burns. The guidance – Report, Remove, Rinse – has been developed with specialist BAPRAS burns and trauma surgeons, who have treated victims of these attacks.



Issued by: Jason Manley, Station Operations Specialist
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Whilst the overall number of people impacted by this type of attack remains low, people are advised to take three simple steps in the event they witness or are victim of an attack:

- *Report the attack: dial 999.*
- *Remove contaminated clothing carefully.*
- *Rinse skin immediately in running water.*

A burns unit serving patients from London and the South East, has seen a substantial increase in the number of people it has helped this year who have been affected by this type of assault. In 2016 the St Andrew's Burns Centre saw 20 people who required admission because of the most serious effects of acid or corrosive burns, a similar number who were treated there over the previous 15 years. The Centre is on course to deliver help to over 30 people in 2017.

People assaulted with corrosive substances like acid are likely to need a range of different care after the emergency response. This could include therapy, specialist burns treatment, and in some instances eye or plastic and reconstructive surgery. This new guidance for victims published today is designed to help people to understand easily what help is available from the NHS. The guidance also offers help to victims' relatives, who can help people cope with the trauma which can follow an attack.

Professor Chris Moran, National Clinical Director for Trauma at NHS England, said: "Whilst this type of criminal assault remains rare, the NHS is caring for an increasing number of people who have fallen victim to these cowardly attacks.

"One moment of thoughtless violence can result in serious physical pain and mental trauma, which can involve months if not years of costly and specialist NHS treatment.

"So-called acid attacks are medical emergencies and people should immediately dial 999. We are issuing guidance today that sets out clearly and simply how people can help themselves and others in response to attacks. Our guidance will outline what first steps to take in the event of an attack in those crucial minutes before professional clinical help arrives on the scene."

David Ward, President of the British Association of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons (BAPRAS), said: "BAPRAS surgeons specialising in burns and trauma have seen first-hand the devastating impact on patients admitted to A&E after vicious corrosive substance attacks. They cause severe pain, scarring which can be life-long, and can damage the sight, sometimes leading to blindness. Unfortunately these vindictive attacks are on the increase.

"The minutes after an acid attack are critical for helping a victim. This guidance BAPRAS has published with NHS England gives the important, urgent steps a victim or witness can take to help reduce the immediate pain and damage, and long-term injuries."

Whilst making this advice available to the public, NHS England have also partnered with a number of organisations, including police forces, ambulance services and the Royal College of Surgeons to ensure this advice is shared with front-line public service people who are often first on the scene.

Guidance is also available on the NHS Choices website.

Acid Attack: Response



A shocking spate of acid attacks have hit the headlines in recent months. Make sure you know what to do if you witness an attack.

Approach

- **R**eport the attack, dial 999
- **R**emove contaminated clothing carefully
- **R**inse skin immediately in running water

Treatment

- Contaminated clothing needs to be removed
- Do not pull clothing over the face -consider removal by cutting
- Protect yourself – use gloves, try to protect your exposed skin by wearing a jacket and use eye protection if available
- Avoid touching contaminated areas
- Rinse the affected area with a steady stream of cool water and ensure that this is away from unaffected skin
- Do not allow acid to enter the nose or mouth as it is important that the casualty's airway is maintained
- Flush these areas first to limit damage, do not rub or wipe area
- Continue the process for at least 20 minutes or until specialist medical resources attend the scene



Noxious Substances Attacks

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Noxious Substances

Strong acids – usually one shot drain cleaner



Strong alkali – laboratory strength ammonia

Delivery Method

The substances are usually decanted into a squeeze sports bottle, e.g. Lucozade.

This is to enable offenders to easily spray the Substance into victims faces.

Chemical in EYES minimum of 10 minutes
Irrigate (The rest of the body 20 mins)



Dealing with an attack

- Call for Ambulance.
- Call BTP or Metropolitan Police to assist.
- Contain the scene to prevent further casualties.
- Start First Aid. (See Below)

First Aid

- Wear gloves/eye protection where available
- Unless the chemical can be identified it should be treated as a chemical burn
- Do NOT try to do a sniff test and inhale the substance
- Ask casualties to disrobe – cut clothes off rather than remove over head if able, remove jewellery
- Irrigate effected area for AT LEAST 10 minutes EYES / 20 minutes rest of body with water/non-hazardous liquid

First Aid

- When irrigating ensure the water does not run down the body causing further injury or under the casualty (be careful that the chemical does not splash on the rescuer)
- Seek advance medical care ASAP
- Do NOT use gauze – this can stick to the wounds
- Do NOT use any ointment