

Information Bulletin No. IB13-011

September 16, 2013

## **ALERT**

### **Salt Bath Heater Incident**

As depicted in the pictures hereunder, we received report in July of a significant explosion of a salt bath heater having occurred at a gas processing facility in Alberta. Shortly after the unit was restarted following routine maintenance and inspection, operators found the unit in an overheated state and proceeded to shut down and isolate it.

The heater reportedly did not appear to be cooling down normally following the shut down, and the explosion occurred soon thereafter. It is unclear as to why the unit did not cool down and it is speculated that a chemical reaction could have happened in the salt bath as a result of the high temperature salt interacting with other substances. A detailed investigation is being undertaken at this time.

Fortunately, this incident only resulted in property damage as all personnel were cleared from the area immediately. There are many similar heaters in use by this company and others in the industry, and these units are operating at increasingly higher temperature because of process needs. This alert is to keep the industry informed that at high temperature the salt can react with other substances such as some metals and material which are part of the process. An explosion can easily lead to far worse consequences as reported in this case.

We wish to acknowledge the company providing us the information and pictures of the incident and the support for pressure equipment safety.

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