

Use of rags: Potential puncture wound

Safety Flash Published on 1 August 2003 Generated on 28 January 2026 IMCA SF 09/03

We have received the following report of a near-miss on board a rig, which provides a reminder of the need for constant safety awareness offshore.

What happened?

A coil tubing supervisor was involved in the process of rigging up equipment on the rig floor. As he was sweating, he went to a rag box and selected an unused rag to wipe his forehead with. After wiping the sweat from his forehead, he noticed a 1" sewing pin that had been left in the rag.

No injury occurred. However, there was considerable potential for a puncture wound to his hands or face.

Our member's investigation noted the following:

The rags came from a chain of suppliers and the rag source was variable.

The company involved has noted that boxes of rags are a widely-used commodity within the industry and that they may not be free from contamination or sharp objects. It is possible that rags may be used to soak up contaminant and then returned to the box.

While there are certain checks within the rag supply process, it is also important that a user checks the rag before use. Everyone should be alert to the possibility of contaminants or sharp objects within rag boxes. As a precaution, the company has stated that rags should not be used to wipe faces.

IMCA Safety Flashes summarise key safety matters and incidents, allowing lessons to be more easily learnt for the benefit of the entire offshore industry.

The effectiveness of the IMCA Safety Flash system depends on the industry sharing information and so avoiding repeat incidents. Incidents are classified according to IOGP's Life Saving Rules.

All information is anonymised or sanitised, as appropriate, and warnings for graphic content included where possible.

IMCA makes every effort to ensure both the accuracy and reliability of the information shared, but is not be liable for any guidance and/or recommendation and/or statement herein contained.

The information contained in this document does not fulfil or replace any individual's or Member's legal, regulatory or other duties or obligations in respect of their operations. Individuals and Members remain solely responsible for the safe, lawful and proper conduct of their operations.

Share your safety incidents with [IMCA online](#). Sign-up to receive Safety Flashes [straight to your email](#).