

KIT Regrets Accident at the Institute of Organic Chemistry

Yesterday evening (January 15, 2014), an accident occurred during a laboratory course at the Institute of Organic Chemistry for students of the third semester. In total, 16 persons were injured by a deflagration. One student suffered a serious injury by broken glass, another person was injured moderately. 14 persons suffered light injuries due to vapors released during the reaction. According to measurements of the Fire Department, no hazardous gases escaped into the atmosphere. Four of the light casualties were allowed to leave the hospital this morning.

“We very much regret this accident and hope that the injured persons will not suffer any permanent damage and recover soon,” Professor Alexander Wanner, Vice President for Higher Education and Academic Affairs at KIT, says. “All necessary safety measures were taken for the laboratory course during which the accident occurred. The students were instructed and the laboratory is organized and equipped to meet all safety requirements. We do not yet know why the accident happened. We have to wait for the results of the investigation by the police.”

The accident happened when disposing of chemicals. On the way to the safety cabinet, where the waste containers are located, nitrosulfuric acid deflagrated. Nitrosulfuric acid consists of sulfuric acid and nitric acid. Normally, this chemical compound is not reactive at all. The causes of the reaction are now being investigated.

On Wednesday evening, the rescue forces arrived immediately. The KIT thanks the rescue forces, the Fire Department, and the police for their quick operation.

Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) is a public corporation according to the legislation of the state of Baden-Württemberg. It fulfills the mission of a university and the mission of a national research center of the Helmholtz Association. Research activities focus on energy, the natural and built environment as well as on society and technology and cover the whole range

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extending from fundamental aspects to application. With about 9000 employees, including nearly 6000 staff members in the science and education sector, and 24000 students, KIT is one of the biggest research and education institutions in Europe. Work of KIT is based on the knowledge triangle of research, teaching, and innovation.

This press release is available on the internet at www.kit.edu.