

MEDIA RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE USE

People who had contact with spray from burst pipe advised to seek medical advice.

Westland Milk Products has issued a notice that anyone who was on the Hokitika riverbank cycleway behind the company's Hokitika Factory between 1pm and 4:30pm today is advised to seek medical attention in case they have come into contact with a potentially harmful liquid.

Communications Manager Steve Attwood said a chemical cleaning hose at the factory's Hokitika rail siding had burst this afternoon, resulting in an uncontrolled chemical release of hot water vapour, which dispersed across the nearby walking and cycleway. For a period of this time the vapour included dilute nitric acid.

Anyone who came into contact with the liquid vapour while acid was present might experience skin rashes, sore or damaged eyes or have respiratory irritation if the vapour was inhaled.

People who believe they have been in contact with the vapour should see their own doctor, local hospital A&E or call the chemical hotline on 0800 243 622 for advice. They should explain they might have been in contact with "ACIDBLEND N600" in dilute form.

The accidental releasing the across the walkway of the liquid occurred between 1pm and 3pm approximately but, as a precaution, anyone in the area up to 4:30pm should get medical advice.

"Even if someone who came in contact with the spray is not showing symptoms, they are best advised to seek medical advice."

Mr Attwood said Westland notified the Grey Base Hospital accident and emergency department and Hokitika medical centres. It has also arranged for a notice regarding the incident to go out on local social media, and issued this media statement.

Westland also notified WorkSafe, local authorities and launched an internal investigation into what happened and how, with a view to ensuring there is no repeat.

ENDS

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