



# Committee on Chemical Safety

## SAFETY ALERT

**Statement from the ACS Committee on Chemical Safety regarding the  
“Tornado Experiment” Accident  
in a Science Museum in Reno, Nevada  
September 5, 2014**

On Wednesday, September 3, 2014, we learned of a chemical incident at a science museum in Reno, Nevada, that injured a number of people including children. The experiment was described as creating a “smoke tornado”. At this point we only have reports from the news media to try and understand what might have happened.

This incident is reminiscent of recent “Rainbow Experiment” incidents that caused the American Chemical Society (ACS), through the Committee on Chemical Safety (CCS), to release a warning about these experiments and a call to cease “Rainbow Demonstrations” using methanol on open bench tops.

CCS calls upon all of our educators to help us reach out to all members of the scientific community to look more carefully at all demonstrations involving the use of methanol on open bench tops. The educational value of these particular demonstrations should be carefully weighed against the risk of flash fires from ignition of methanol vapors. At no time should methanol be poured from an open bottle on an open bench top in the presence of a flame or source of ignition – the risk of a flash fire is very great.