

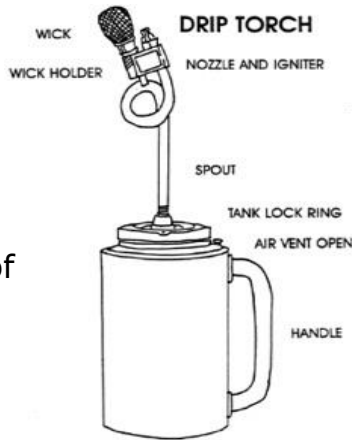


Severe burns due to a catastrophic failure of a modified driptorch: A case report

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Introduction: Driptorches are tools used in agriculture and forestry industries to intentionally ignite fires for burning off of vegetation. The driptorch consists a canister connected to a spout containing a loop preventing fuel igniting in the canister. A breather valve allows oxygen into the canister as it exits via the spout, and a wick at the end of the spout drips fuel usually a mix of petrol and diesel in varying mixes onto the ground. Homemade variations and adaptations of commercial driptorches are routinely undertaken and attached to farming vehicles.

Objectives: This is the first case report of a severe burn reported in the literature related to catastrophic failure of a homemade driptorch modified and attached to a vehicle.



Methods: A 57-year farmer was admitted to the Western Australian State Burns Unit after being airlifted via helicopter with TBSA 10% burns to his face, right arm and flank. A modified driptorch using a fuel canister, combined with a nine-liter LPG cylinder as a continuous ignition source, with a plastic spout and wick had become blocked whilst the farmer was on the tray lighting wheat stubble, after removing the wick from the spout, fuel sprayed on the the farmer and tray of the utility igniting both the vehicle and the farmer.

Conclusion: Driptorches are dangerous pieces of farming equipment and strict guidelines and standards should be enforced to ensure their modification and safe practice is implemented in the agricultural and forestry industries.

