Energy Lab oven explodes
By Heather Preston

An explosion blew open the door of an Energy Laboratory oven in Building 12 late Wednesday night, releasing acrid fumes into 12-025 and the basement corridors around it.

Some XAD, a polystyrene powder, was being dried in the oven after hours when the laboratory is unsupervised. Laboratory supervisor Ed Kruzel found that the setting on the oven thermostat was ignited by the automatic switching on of the oven's thermostat.

The resulting explosion and bursting of XAD drew the attention of graduate students from nearby offices. They quickly called the fire department and the Campus Police, but the XAD had exploded itself by the time they arrived. The fumes cleared within fifteen minutes and the graduate students and faculty members left. MIT Safety Officer Joe Kuchta and a Physical Plant clean-up crew then joined Kruzel at the scene of the accident.

"We've been leaving the lab open for graduate and undergraduate students who want to work on their projects late at night, but we may have to change that policy," said Kruzel, examining the damaged oven. "Sixty-five centigrade is the maximum temperature for drying XAD. Personally, I use lower temperatures, but the students will try to ranch the drying process sometimes, and it's just not safe."

Directly under the oven in which the gas ignited were about twenty gallon-size glass containers full of methyl chloride, a flammable solvent used to extract absorbent KAD powder. The smoke alarm in the laboratory failed to detect the fumes that filled the laboratories and corridors although, as one graduate student said, "It was just black with smoke in there."

The marriage between God and modern cosmology will be discussed by Michael Koren, in Judaism and Christianity: Imperfect Love, on Tuesday, February 23rd & 24th. For more information about job opportunities, contact Mr. Erebin at 864-3900.

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THE TECH FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1982

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