Wrong Kind of Light Sets Off Explosion

A painter died of burns suffered in an explosion which occurred when he was working inside a newly-constructed large steel tank. A co-worker outside the tank survived with burns and a broken arm.

The first victim had been spray painting the inside of the tank. The co-worker had placed a non-explosion-proof lamp at the opening of the vessel. The nozzle of the spray paint gun struck the lamp, breaking the sealed enclosure. The exposed light ignited the vapors, causing the explosion.

The painter managed to crawl out of the vessel while the co-worker was knocked to the ground by the explosion. The painter died in the hospital several days later.

When working conditions involve confined spaces or flammable vapors or both, extreme caution is required to prevent serious mishaps. Buildup of flammable gases and vapors is a common problem in confined spaces where air circulation is restricted. That is why it is vitally important to choose tools designed to prevent ignition by a heat source or sparks, and follow all other precautions.