

## **Employer Requirements for Using Compressed Gases**

Employers are required to comply with multiple regulations regarding workplace safety, be they federal, state or local laws. Some of the most common OSHA violations cited during workplace inspections relate to compressed gas hazards and related requirements.

### **Employer Requirements**

Employers are responsible for the safe use of compressed gas cylinders and their contents both when in use by employees and when in storage. The definition of “in use” as well as storage and other requirements differ depending on your workplace. Be sure to consult the correct OSHA regulations for your industry. Construction (1926), Shipyard (1915), Marine Terminal (1917), and General Industry (1910) Standards can all be found free of charge on the OSHA website at <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/compressedgasequipment/standards.html>

One of the first steps you should do is evaluate the compressed gas-hazards present in your workplace and make sure you have an emergency response plan written that clearly defines the proper procedures for safe use and storage. Your plan should also clearly address how you and your employees will respond to any emergencies such as leaks, accidental discharges or fires. Be sure to include your local fire and EMS departments in your planning and share a copy of your final policy with them and any other necessary agencies.

Compressed gases should only be handled and used by trained personnel. Be sure that all employees are properly trained when hired and have ongoing refresher training. All employee training must include information on the specific hazards presented by the gases used and stored. This can be done as part of your overall Hazard Communication program by training employees how to properly read labels, warning signs, MSDS sheets, and other forms of information and warning. Always consult the gas supplier's material safety data sheets (MSDS) for specific information.

### **Employee Training Topics**

In addition to the specific hazards related to your gases, you should also be sure to train employees on the following:

- Only trained and authorized personnel may perform maintenance on cylinders.

- The stamped markings contain specific information; employees should never remove or alter any cylinder markings.
- All cylinders require labels. Labels should not be defaced or removed except by authorized employees during maintenance. Employees should not accept, or use, any cylinders whose labels are not clearly legible. If employees do discover an unmarked cylinder or an unreadable cylinder label they should segregate these containers in a safe location away from all other cylinders and alert a supervisor to make arrangements to return them to the supplier.
- Cylinder colors vary from supplier to supplier. What is one color from one supplier could be something completely opposite from another. Always check labels before using. If in doubt about the contents of a cylinder ask before using.
- Always leave the valve protection caps in place and hand-tightened until cylinders are secured and in use (or connected for use).
- Keep cylinder valves closed except when the cylinder is being used.
- When opening a valve, stand to one side of the regulator and open it slowly.
- Replace protective caps and outlet caps or plugs before returning empty cylinders to the supplier.
- Never tamper with, or alter, cylinders, valves, or safety-related devices. Do not tighten connections or leaking fittings or attempt other repairs while the system is under pressure.
- Keep cylinders away from all heat sources and never allow a flame to contact any part of the cylinder. Never heat a cylinder above 125 degrees F.
- Avoid rolling or carrying a cylinder. Cylinders should always be transported using a cart or similar device.

Always be sure to document your training sessions to show a clear record of training begin performed. One excellent way to make sure training is documented is by placing a copy of a training certificate or the class sign in sheet in each employee Human Resources file.

The Safety Consultants from Maine Oxy are available to assist you with developing a written plan if you need some help in getting started. Your sales representative can help you connect to a variety of safety services available from Maine Oxy.

**Disclaimer:** *This safety tip sheet is intended to provide basic safety and health recommendations to our customers. While every effort is made to provide timely and accurate advice, it is not a guarantee of total compliance to all applicable regulations. Consult the proper regulatory authorities for any and all specific requirements for your location.*