



Toolbox Talk

Compressed Gas Cylinders: The Sleeping Giant

You may have heard “familiarity breeds contempt.” When it comes to your safety and health, familiarity can also nurture a false sense of security sharing your workspace with a hazardous object which has never caused you harm. If no catastrophic event occurs, people tend to disbelieve or ignore the potential danger they may be exposed to.

Compressed gas cylinders are a good example. We hardly even notice them after a while. And, yet, if not handled and stored correctly, they can become an unguided missile or bomb destroying everything in their paths.

(NOTE: The following is not intended as an all-inclusive list, only a reminder of some most often neglected safety precautions):

General Inspection Requirements

- Ensure all cylinders are legibly marked to identify the gas content
- Visually inspect cylinders entering the workplace and prior to placing into service
- Immediately remove any defective cylinder from the workplace. If the cylinder is leaking, immediately take the cylinder outdoors away from sources of ignition and slowly empty

General Safe Storage Requirements

- Do not store near sources of heat or highly combustible material, such as oil
- Never leave a compressed gas cylinder freestanding, even for short periods of time (such as when awaiting pickup by the vendor to refill). Always secure in place with a chain or other adjustable length of material or store in a stable rack
- Always replace the cap when the cylinder is in storage
- Never store more than one oxygen cylinder with more than one fuel-gas cylinder, such as acetylene, unless the cylinders are separated by at least a five-foot firewall or a minimum distance of 20 feet
- Never store acetylene on its side

General Safe Handling Requirements

- Keep cylinders and their components free of oil and grease
- Do not handle oxygen cylinders with oily hands or gloves
- Do not allow a jet of oxygen to strike an oily or greasy surface, including clothing being worn
- Do not lift cylinders vertically by the valve protection cap
- Do not allow cylinders to violently strike, be struck by other objects or otherwise be handled roughly
- Close the valve; replace the cap prior to moving unless secured on a special handtruck
- Close the valves of all empty cylinders
- Do not allow cylinders to become part of an energized electrical circuit



- Never use a cylinder as a roller or support, whether full or empty
- Never use a hammer or wrench to open a cylinder valve
- Always attach a regulator to oxygen cylinders in use
- Do not attempt to repair cylinder valves, mix gases in or fill a cylinder unless authorized

Always treat a compressed gas cylinder with respect and as if it were full.

