

Pressurized Cylinders

The following paragraph is taken from a recent report published by the Accident Prevention Bureau. It gives a brief account of a disaster which occurred in a plant.

"Last week, another industry in our city had an explosion which killed three men and injured 30 others. It involved the explosion of a single oxygen bottle. No one can imagine a single oxygen bottle doing this much damage, but it did. The top of the bottle was found high in one of the plant's structures, the bottom buried deep in the ground, and the center portion disintegrated in the form of shrapnel – blowing arms, legs and even a head off." Not a very pleasant thought, is it?

Under certain conditions, the oxygen cylinder, along with other types of compressed gas cylinders, can become destructive and lethal bombs. Even though an oxygen cylinder has steel walls approximately one-quarter inch thick, dropping the cylinder, hitting it with heavy or sharp tools, or striking an electric arc on it can cause the cylinder to explode violently, causing serious injury and death.

It is important to remember that when you handle cylinder gases, you know the contents of each cylinder. Sometimes, different manufacturers package the same gas in different colored cylinders. The label is the only reliable guide in determining what the cylinder actually contains.

The label also identifies the hazards associated with the gas and the precautions to be taken. If a label is missing, or is illegible, immediately notify your supervisor so that the supplier may be contacted.

When we think of our periodic or everyday use of cylinder gases, the environment into which the cylinder is placed must be given special consideration. Cylinders never should be stored near an actual or potential source of heat, or where they will be exposed to extreme weather conditions. Cylinders should not be stored in areas where they may become part of an electric circuit or where heavy moving objects could strike or fall on them. Use of any spark-producing electrical tools, smoking, and open flames are prohibited in storage areas.

When cylinders are empty, the valves should be closed. All accessories originally shipped with them should be attached and returned in the same manner as they were received. Mark the cylinder "empty", and place it away from full cylinders to await pickup.

Remember, accidents don't just happen. Proper care and information can reduce the probability of their occurrence, enabling us to continue enjoying the many benefits of compressed gases on various applications.

Products and services are provided by one or more insurance company subsidiaries of W. R. Berkley Corporation. Not all products and services are available in every jurisdiction. Certain coverages may be provided through surplus lines insurance company subsidiaries of W. R. Berkley Corporation through licensed surplus lines brokers. Surplus lines insurers do not generally participate in state guaranty funds and insureds are therefore not protected by such funds. Berkley Life Sciences conducts business in California as Berkley LS Insurance Solutions, LLC, a licensed surplus lines broker (License Number 0H44165).

This material is provided to you for general informational purposes only. Coverage afforded under any insurance policy issued is subject to the individual terms and conditions of that policy as issued. Claims scenarios are hypothetical in nature and for illustrative purposes.

Maintaining safe operations and a safe facility in accordance with all laws is your responsibility. We make no representation or warranty, express or implied, that our activities or advice will place you in compliance with the law; that your premises or operations are safe; or that the information provided is complete, free from errors or timely. We are not liable for any direct, indirect, special, incidental or consequential damages resulting from the use or misuse of this information. You are not entitled to rely upon this information or any loss control activities provided by us and you may not delegate any of your legal responsibilities to us. All loss control activities are conducted solely for the purpose of, and in accordance with, our underwriting activities.