

5 Minute Safety Talk

Compressed Air - Caution: Serious Injury or Death May Occur

Compressed air is often misjudged and not recognized as a hazard because people often think of air as harmless. Blowing dust and dirt off clothes, hair and the face is a very hazardous misuse of compressed air. This practice is very dangerous and is not permitted under any circumstances. Most companies have air blowers in each shop that use fan-forced air, not compressed air to remove dust from clothes. At no time should employees use the direct compressed air towards their body or anyone else's. This would include using compressed air while holding a product or component to clean off dust or debris.

Compressed air is extremely forceful. On rare occasions, some of the compressed air can enter the blood stream through a break in the skin or a body opening. An air bubble in the blood stream is known medically as an embolism, a dangerous medical condition in which a blood vessel is blocked, in this case, by an air bubble. An embolism of an artery can cause coma, paralysis or death depending upon its size, duration, and location. When an air pocket reaches the heart, it causes symptoms like a heart attack. Upon reaching the brain, pockets of air may lead to a stroke.



Unfortunately, horseplay has been a cause of some serious workplace accidents caused by individuals not aware of the hazards of compressed air, or proper work procedures.

Watch this quick video showing the horror of a prank with compressed air that costs the life of a factory worker!

A prank played on a worker at a factory went horribly wrong. CCTV footage shows an employee approaching another employee on the factory floor. After which the employee holds a compressed air pipe against him. The worker immediately collapsed in agony and was rushed to a nearby hospital. He died two weeks later because of his severe intestinal injuries

SAFETY LESSONS:

- Do not be fooled into thinking that safety nozzles which regulate pressure to 30 psi can be safely used to clean the human body. Even 30 psi is too much pressure for these sensitive areas.
- As little as 12 pounds of pressure can blow an eye out of its socket.
- Compressed air entering the mouth can rupture the esophagus with as little as 5 pounds of pressure.
- Because compressed air contains small amounts of oil and other contaminants, anytime compressed air is blown under the skin these contaminants enter the body and may cause dangerous infection.
- Never aim or spray compressed air at a fellow employee for any reason.