



Safe Work Practice

Compressed Air

Prepared by: Gordon Hood, Coordinator Health, Safety and Environment

Approved by: Jim Toye, City Manager

Signature:  **Practice No:** 7.1.11

Effective: September 13, 2018 **Replaces:** July 2008

Personal Protective Equipment:

Safety glasses / face shield, gloves, protective footwear, hearing protection

Introduction:

Compressed air can be extremely forceful. Depending upon the pressure, compressed air can dislodge particles at very high velocities. These dislodged particles may enter a worker's eyes or abrade the skin. The degree of damage is dependent upon the size, weight, shape, composition and velocity of the particles.

Compressed air can enter the blood stream through a break in the skin or through a body opening. An air bubble in the blood stream is called an embolism. An embolism is a dangerous medical condition in which a blood vessel is blocked by an air bubble. Embolisms of arteries may cause coma, paralysis, or even death depending upon the location, size and duration of the embolism.

Hearing can also be damaged by the sound of escaping air.

Use of Compressed Air:

Compressed air shall not be used to clean clothing. The practice of using compressed air to remove dust from clothing is dangerous because particles may puncture the skin or enter the eyes.

Using compressed air to clean machinery or equipment can be hazardous for the same reasons and should only be used when other alternatives are not practical. If compressed air is used to clean machinery, equipment or any surface the following precautions must be taken:

1. Eye protection, hearing protection, protective clothing and equipment must be worn by all workers.
2. Any area where compressed air is used for cleaning machinery or equipment must be kept clear of all other personnel not directly involved with the work.

3. A blowpipe complete with a method of controlling the air flow must be installed on the end of the air hose. (control valve)
4. The compressed air supply must be limited to 200 kPa or 30 Psi or safety nozzles must be installed to have the same effect.