



Weekly Safety Tip

Working Safely with Compressed Air



Working Safely with Compressed Air



Compressed air has many uses in the workplace. It is used for inflating tires, powering pneumatic tools, and pneumatic pumps. Many workers also use it for cleaning purposes. Unfortunately, many employees don't take the necessary safety precautions because they are unaware compressed air has the ability to cause serious injuries and even fatalities in the workplace.

In response to these workplace injuries OSHA created a specific regulation regarding the use of compressed air for cleaning under [CFR 29 1910.242 \(b\)](#) which states:

“Compressed air shall not be used for cleaning purposes except where reduced to less than 30 psi and then only with effective chip guarding and personal protective equipment.”

OSHA adopted this regulation because a highly pressurized air nozzle can become a weapon, create a noise-filled work environment, cause respiratory hazards, or even cause a serious medical condition known as an air embolism.

Because of this safety concern, it is imperative that employees understand they CANNOT use compressed air for cleaning dust off themselves. The risk of injury is simply too great.

*An **air embolism**, in a medical context, refers to an air or gas bubble moving through the bloodstream. If an employee has an open wound on their arm and they use compressed air to clean the dust off their body, there is a risk of creating an embolism. Embolisms in the bloodstream are known to cause comas, paralysis, or even death depending on their size, duration, and location.*

Tools to Help Use Compressed Air Safely

Air blow guns can be fitted with various safety devices such as an adjustable air pressure regulator. The pressure regulator is used to turn down the psi output for that individual air hose.

Another type of safety device that can reduce the gun's air pressure is a nozzle that has one or more relief ports. Not only can this type of nozzle reduce air pressure, but if a metal piece is lodged in the end of the extra air outlet nozzle, the air will be forced out the side outlets instead of putting force behind the metal projectile.

Additional protection may be necessary if there is an added hazard of flying particles. Effective chip guarding uses a screen or barrier in order to prevent a chip or particle from being blown into a worker's eyes or skin.

Some state agencies go beyond federal regulation. For example California has adopted [California General Industry Safety Orders Group 2 Article 7 Section 3301 \(a\)](#):

“Compressed air or other compressed gases in excess of 10 pounds per square inch gauge shall not be used to blow dirt, chips, or dust from clothing while it is being worn.”

9 Safety Tips for Using Compressed Air

1. Use a properly rated nozzle with an output of 30 psi or less for any air guns being used for cleaning purposes.
2. Only use air guns that have a safety nozzle or chip guarding, which protects against potential projectiles.
3. Minimize the use of compressed air cleaning by using filtered shop vacs, sweeping, and wet method collections.
4. Fit air lines used for compressed air cleaning with pressure regulators.
5. Check your local regulations to see if your state requires a psi pressure of less than 15.
6. Communicate and train employees on the hazards associated with using compressed air.
7. Ensure that workers understand that horseplay is never allowed when using compressed air.
8. Keep air hoses rolled up and off the ground to prevent tripping hazards.
9. Do not use hose clamps to repair compressed air hoses.

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Weekly Safety Share



Did you know that

October was "Protect Your Hearing" Month?



SAFETY & HEALTH SHARE

Dave Varwig
for **SCNWO**

Did you know that October was “*protect your hearing*” month?

Bet you didn't ‘hear’ much about it, but you should have !...



National Protect Your Hearing Month is an annual event each October to provide an opportunity to raise awareness about hearing. People are encouraged to think about their own hearing, and to get their hearing checked if they think there might be a problem.

Early identification and intervention for hearing loss is important. Many people live with unidentified hearing loss, often failing to realize that they are missing certain sounds and words. Checking one's hearing would be the first step towards addressing the issue.

Do you use your music, your show, or a podcast to shut out the noise around you? Be cautious; hearing loss is real. A volume that lets you hear someone a few feet away is a safer way to go.

Avoid loud noise whenever possible and turn down the volume on personal listening devices.

If you can't avoid loud noise, use earplugs or earmuffs to protect your ears.

If you suspect you may already have hearing loss, take steps to keep it from getting worse.

Get your hearing checked.

Did You Know?

Repeated exposure to loud noise over the years can damage your hearing—long after exposure has stopped. . . Think you are aware of how to protect yourself?

When it comes to hearing loss, we can all think of the usual suspects: attending sporting events, entertainment venues, and loud concerts.

Volume isn't the only factor to consider. **Noise exposure is cumulative.**

Practice safe listening at home, school, and while commuting by reducing the duration of headphone use.

Give your ears a rest!



By the Numbers

Sound is measured in decibels (dB). A whisper is about 30 dB, normal conversation is about 60 dB, and a motorcycle engine is about 95 dB. Noise above 70 dB over a prolonged period may start to damage your hearing. Loud noise above 120 dB can cause immediate harm.



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