

SAFETY ALERT

ACETYLENE

This alert is intended to communicate the dangers of using acetylene for anything other than its intended purposes.

Over the years, there have been a number of reported incidents involving acetylene being used improperly. In 1994 alone, there were two documented incidents brought to the attention of the Compressed Gas Association (CGA). In both cases, individuals were using acetylene to inflate either balloons or plastic shopping bags. The inflated bags or balloons were then to be ignited to produce a large bang. In one case, an individual was burned over 50% of his body. In the other case, a father was not only killed by the shock wave in front of his children, but some of his children suffered injuries too. Both incidents resulted in a significant amount of property damage as well. Damage ranged from windows and doors being blown out of a warehouse to windows being shattered in the neighborhood.

The same properties that make acetylene an attractive gas for cutting and welding, also make it an extremely dangerous gas to abuse in this manner. Any effort to transfer or mix acetylene into another container including a balloon, plastic bag, or another cylinder is highly dangerous. See CGA G-1, *Acetylene*, for additional information [1].

Even under circumstances where a “knowledgeable” person thinks he or she can do it safely, “playing” with acetylene is a very high-risk activity. Acetylene can easily be ignited by static electricity. It is because of this fact that plastic piping is not used in the transmission of acetylene.

Engaging in practices such as these is extremely hazardous. Not only can one be severely burned by acetylene’s high heat content, but one can also be killed or severely injured by the intense shock wave that may be created by a small quantity of gas when ignited.

Please use this alert to communicate the hazards of acetylene abuse to your employees and customers.

Reference

Unless otherwise specified, the latest edition shall apply.

[1] CGA G-1, *Acetylene*, Compressed Gas Association, Inc. www.cganet.com

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Acetylene Committee

NOTE—No technical information has been changed from the 2003 edition. This reaffirmed edition may include minor editorial changes.

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