

OSEA Management Advisor

The Workplace Experts



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SAFETY

Venting of Gas from Pipes—Fatal Again

In 1999, workers taking a boiler out of service at a power plant in Dearborn, Mich., mistakenly blew natural gas from the surrounding pipes into the boiler, where it built up, met with something hot and exploded. Six workers died and 38 were injured. In 2007, two plumbers, in a process known as purging, pushed natural gas through new piping and into the interior of a hotel under construction in Cheyenne, Wyo. They did not smell the gas as it filled the room; it exploded, severely burning them both.

There had been several similar explosions in the intervening years. But there was no major regulatory change to directly address the central and repeated issue: where gas should be vented when it is being pushed through pipes during construction or maintenance. Then, last June, gas being purged from a pipe at a beef jerky factory in Garner, N.C., filled a room and exploded, killing four workers and injuring 67.

That explosion led the federal Chemical Safety Board to consider changes to regulations governing where gas purged from pipes is directed and at what rate. The board, split over differences of opinion about how far its powers extended, did not approve the recommended changes until Feb. 4

Just three days later, workers at a power plant under construction in Middletown, Conn., were purging gas through pipes when an explosion, apparently near the gas release point, killed five workers and shocked the surrounding area.

Investigators looking into the circumstances of the blast — a deadly disaster that wounded a community and dealt an enormous setback to what was to be one of the region's most ambitious power projects in years — have barely begun their work.

But the purging of gas from pipes has been a common theme in at least seven serious industrial accidents since 1997, according to the Chemical Safety Board, and the board has been critical of the hodgepodge of local regulations that allow the procedure to be conducted dangerously. Others have, too.

"I don't know what else has to be done before this is stopped so that more workers aren't killed," said Tom O'Connor, coordinator of the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health, a nonprofit coalition of labor unions, health and technical professionals and others interested in workplace safety.

The blast in Connecticut occurred in a "courtyard" area, where the gas purged from pipes was being ventilated. There is no information yet about what might have ignited the gas.

The explosion happened outside of the building. That's where the valves were that they were testing and doing the purging work. Mr. Phelps said purging the pipes is one of the final steps in the construction of power plants and is necessary because even the smallest particle left inside can damage pipes and equipment.

There are no federal regulations that govern the purging process.

Continued—Page 3

Welcome

Renewals

Apollo Steel
Cambria Contracting
Chemical Distributors
Conax Buffalo Technologies
Samco Technologies

Small Business Safety Assoc.
*Compliance...
affordable & accessible*

CONSTRUCTION

Electrocution



Worker's Electrocution Leads to \$112,000 Fine for Contractor

OSHA has cited a specialty contractor for alleged workplace safety violations following a fatality at the company's work-site. Proposed penalties total \$112,000.

OSHA began its inspection when an employee who was removing a demountable wall made contact with a live wire and died. The company was cited for two alleged willful violations for failing to adequately protect employees from energized electrical circuits and failing to inform employees about the hazards involved with energized electrical circuits.

Source: *ohsonline.com*

Pipeline Explosion

Companies Cited by OSHA Following Explosion During Pipeline Construction

Three companies have been cited by OSHA for exposing workers to hazards during the construction of gas pipeline meter stations. The companies received citations for failing to protect their workers after one died and three others were critically injured.

OSHA began its investigation after a July 2009 explosion at a meter station construction site in killed one worker. Other workers were also critically injured. The OSHA Area Director noted that this tragedy could have been avoided if the companies involved had followed government and industry standards when conducting their pressure tests.

OSHA cited one company with two willful violations for exposing workers to struck-by hazards while performing pressure tests. The second company was cited with one willful and three serious violations related to exposing workers to struck-by hazards and failing to provide adequate training. The third company was cited with two serious violations for also exposing workers to struck-by hazards and one serious violation for allowing the use of a stairway without a railing. Proposed penalties for the three companies total \$189,400.

Source: *ehstoday*

Gas Venting *(continued from pg. 1)*

Three independent organizations — the National Fire Protection Association, the American Gas Association and the International Code Council — set standards that are adopted by many jurisdictions. The standards set by those bodies allow for the gas to be purged into enclosed spaces, so long as “precautions are taken to perform this operation in a safe manner by ventilation of the space, control of purging rate, and elimination of all hazardous conditions.”

Contractors often rely on nothing more sophisticated than the human nose to tell them when gas is reaching dangerous levels, the safety board found. This is problematic for many reasons: Natural gas has no smell, other than an odorant that is infused into it; new piping decreases the impact of the odorant; and humans become acclimated to the smell the longer they are exposed to it.

In October, the Chemical Safety Board considered urgent recommendations for new regulations that gas be released outdoors, if at all possible, and monitored. If gas must be released indoors, the board suggested, it should require the approval of local authorities, with levels and ventilation closely monitored and all other personnel evacuated.

But two members of the board voted against the proposal, arguing that the outside groups were better qualified to address the details. One of the two members who opposed the recommendations has since departed and the proposal was adopted the first week of Feb. A committee of the NFPA will consider the recommendations later this month.

Source: *NY Times/R.Buettner*

Natural gas has no smell, other than an odorant that is infused into it

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OSEA March Training**Buffalo**

- 8-12 24/40-Hr Hazwoper
- 11 Trenching & Excavation
- 11 Confined Space
- 12 HazMat Transportation
- 19 OSHA Recordkeeping
- 22 Work Zone/Flagging
- 26 OSHA General Industry Safety
- 29 Scaffold Competent Person

April 9

8-Hr Hazwoper Refresher**Syracuse**

- 12 8-Hr Hazwoper Refresher
- 15 Work Zone/Flagging
- 30 10-Hr OSHA Construction

April 12-14

24/40-Hr Hazwoper**Charlotte**

March 4, 11, 18, 25 & April 1
Supervisory Safety Strategies

- 12 8-Hr Hazwoper Refresher
- 23-25 10-Hr Construction Safety

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HIGHLIGHTS

Cardiac Science Recalling AED's

On February 9, 2010, the FDA posted a recall notice announcing Cardiac Science had begun a worldwide voluntary recall of about 12,200 automated external defibrillators on Feb. 3. The company's announcement is separate from its Nov. 13, 2009, voluntary device correction, and it affects Powerheart 9300A, 9300E, 9300P, 9390A, and 9390E; CardioVive 92532; and CardioLife 9200G and 9231 units that were manufactured or serviced between Oct. 19, 2009, and Jan. 15, 2010, according to the company.



Cardiac Science said the affected AEDs "may not be able to deliver therapy during a resuscitation attempt, which may lead to serious adverse events or death. These AEDs were manufactured in a way that makes them potentially susceptible to failure under certain conditions. The FDA has been informed of this situation."

Customers who received an AED since Oct. 19, 2009, may check a table posted by Cardiac Science to determine whether they have an affected AED. If they do, it should be immediately removed from service. "All affected AEDs will be replaced at no charge to the customer. For information, contact the company at 888-402-2484; Customers may e-mail aed195@cardiacscience.com for more information.

Source: www.ohsonline.com

Zoll Medical Corp is offering its Pocket CPR® training app for iPhones as a free download during February in recognition of the American Heart Association's American Heart Month. While it is useful to professional or lay rescuers dealing with sudden cardiac arrest, PocketCPR® is not cleared by the FDA for rescue use.