



COMPRESSED AIR

Arkansas Workers' Compensation
Commission/Health & Safety Division

www.awcc.state.ar.us 1-800-622-4472 fax: 501-

Air pollution is a concern of most everyone. But there are dangers other than pollution which involved air. We'll talk about one of these today—the use of compressed air.

Compressed air is not a plaything and must be used in a safe manner. So before grabbing an air hose and going into action, there are a number of safety guidelines which should be followed.

- First of all, be sure that it's an air line you have, not gas or water. Fitting and valves took different, but sometimes hose lines cross, and you could be fooled. Take time to make sure each time you use compressed air.
- Next, check to be sure the air hose is good condition. An air hose is designed to withstand pressure, but it becomes weakened at the places where it is bent, where it is attached to a shut off valve and to the nozzle, and wherever it has been kinked. Such weak points may swell like a balloon and burst, throwing pieces of hose in every direction. This may also cause the hose to thrash about dangerously. These precautions should be followed:
 - ✓ Keep air hoses off the floor where they are a trip hazard and subject to damage by trucks, doors, and dropped tools.
 - ✓ Prevent sharp objects—even hose fittings that have been burred—from rubbing against the hose.
 - ✓ Always coil the hose—without kinks—and hang it over a broad support, not over a hook, nail, or angle iron, when not in use.
- Where you have a choice of pressure, use the lowest pressure that will do the job. There are many good reasons for this, and here are a few:
 - ★ Air pressure of 40 lbs. can drive chips, as well as scale, from inside the piping into your face and eyes with the force of shrapnel. Such air driven missiles still do damage when they bounce off a surface, spinning much like a high speed cutting head.

- ★ Air pressure against the skin may penetrate deeply to cause internal hemorrhage and intense pain.
- ★ Air that enters body openings can burst internal organs and cause slow agonizing death.
- ★ Air, even at 40 lbs., can blow an eye from its socket or rupture an ear drum.

☞ Certainly, no one would intentionally cause such injuries. Yet, every so often, someone does, either accidentally or in ignorance, thinking it's a joke. The nozzle of an air hose is a deadly weapon. Don't point it at anyone, not even yourself. Use safe, better ways of cleaning dust from your clothes-by vacuum cleaning or brushing. Dust blown from anything merely rises a little and then settles again to become a nuisance. Some of the dust blown into the air ends up in our lungs, and that's not where we want it.

☞ In a few cases, standard safe procedures are set up for trained employees using equipment with known safety factors and observing approved safe practices. These include the following instances:

- ◆ Use low pressure 30 lbs. or less, and the right nozzle. Wear cup-type goggles, and set up shields to protect passers-by and others in the area.
- ◆ By now the message should be clear-compressed air must be treated with respect. It's a valuable tool, but it must be used intelligently and in a safe manner.

