

# Compressed Air Safety

Compressed air is often misjudged and not recognized as a hazard because people think of air as harmless.

- Air forced into body tissues through skin can cause an air embolism (air bubbles in the bloodstream) which can be fatal if it reaches the heart, lungs, or brain.
- Inflation injuries of the intestine can be caused by air being directed at private body areas. A worker in the U.K. died of injuries sustained through horseplay with a compressed air hose. The act of horseplay can be deadly!
- Air blown into the mouth at only 5 PSI can rupture the esophagus or the lungs.
- Eye and ear injuries can occur from a blast of air or flying particles. These types of eye and ear injuries can cause partial or total loss of sight and hearing.
- The sound from a compressed air hose can reach 120-130 dB which is well above OSHA's 90dB permissible exposure limit.
- 40 PSI can blow out an ear drum from 4 inches away and possibly cause brain damage.
- As little as 12 PSI can blow an eye out of its socket!
- Flying particles can cause cuts and bruises to any part of the body.



## Remember:

- Hoses and lines should be rated to meet the maximum operating pressure of the equipment.
- Always wear proper Personal Protective Equipment:
  - Safety glasses with side shields and a face shield if needed
  - Hearing protection
  - Respiratory protection, depending on the material(s) being worked with.

## COMPRESSED AIR SAFETY

- Normal work clothing is not protection against compressed air.
- If you must clean with compressed air, do not use air that is set above 30 PSI. You must also have effective chip guarding and proper PPE (OSHA standard 1910.242(b)).
- NEVER USE COMPRESSED AIR TO CLEAN CLOTHING OR HAIR!
- NEVER POINT COMPRESSED AIR AT YOURSELF OR ANOTHER PERSON!

### ***Action Item:***

Go through the manufacturer's safety recommendations in the air compressor's safety manual and read and understand the maintenance requirements for the compressor.

### ***Related Topics:***

### ***Resources and References:***

VOSHA/OSHA Standards 29CFR1910.135 and 1926.100 for more information Standards are available at <http://www.osha.gov/laws-regs.html>

