

Compressed Air Safety

Compressed air is defined as air stored at greater pressure than the surrounding atmosphere. Air can be distributed through either the use of compressors or a building integrated system. Compressed air powers pneumatic tools such as nail guns, paint sprayers, impact wrenches, or machinery. Compress air, if not used properly, can also cause injury.

Potential Hazards from Improper Use

- Flying particles, chips, and debris can cause eye injury.
- High noise levels can cause hearing damage.
- Loose, damaged, clogged, or leaky hoses can detach and whip or strike operators or anyone close by.
- High pressure air can penetrate skin (even through clothing) and enter the bloodstream.



Accident Prevention – Do’s

When working with compressed air, follow these precautions:

- Always wear the proper PPE (eye, face, hearing, gloves, etc.) per manufacturers’ guidelines.
- Examine all connections to ensure they are tight and will not detach under pressure.
- Clear all dirt and debris from hose openings/connections before connection are made.
- Regularly inspect pneumatic tools and hoses for damage or signs of failure.
- Regularly inspect and maintain air generators per manufacturers’ guidelines.
- Immediately remove any equipment that are damaged, frayed, have bad connections, or show signs of failure
- Keep aisles clear of hoses. They present trip hazards and can be damaged by foot/equipment traffic.
- Ensure all air generators guards and shields are in place and in good working order before use.
- Ensure air gun safety tips are OSHA compliant. If air hoses are dead-ended (i.e., tip is blocked), the pressure at the point of the blockage must not exceed 30 psi.



Safety Tip

Accident Prevention – Don’ts

- Never horseplay with compressed air. Accidents happen!
- Never use compressed air to clean yourself or others. There is a high risk of eye injury.
- When cleaning surfaces and equipment with compressed air, the pressure must be 30 psi or below, the air gun must safety tips, and chip guards and proper PPE must be used. Always consider an alternate method of cleaning if possible.
- Never kink hoses or block pneumatic tools to stop airflow; always turn air off at the control valve.
- Never interfere or tamper with any safety devices.
- Never leave pneumatic tools or air guns still holding pressure unattended. Turn off and detach before leaving unattended.
- Never use homemade air nozzles or connections.
- The air generator’s motor oil should not be neglected. Oil should be drained and replaced per manufacturer guidelines.

