

THE DEPARTMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY



HAZARD ALERT

2000/02/23

SUBJECT: ALUMINUM GAS CYLINDERS

Numerous agencies in North America have issued warnings to users of compressed gas cylinders of a potential problem with cylinders made of aluminum. These problem cylinders were made in North America until July 1990 from aluminum alloy 6351. Any cylinder falling under this description could suddenly fail by developing cracks in the aluminum alloy.

These cylinders could range in size from lecture size and up and may be in use in chemical laboratories, medical service areas and even SCBA and SCUBA tanks. To determine if you have one of these cylinders you must look at the manufacture date code on the cylinder. If you are uncertain if the cylinder is aluminum look for the code "3AL" somewhere on the manufacture date code. You may find more than one date on your cylinders. If so you will want to locate the oldest one to determine the manufacture date. The other dates are recertification date and will not have any bearing on this notice.

Any cylinder falling under these criteria must be tested every 5 years (every 3 if it is a composite tank) by a certified testing agency. Many of the manufacturers are recommending annual testing for their affected products. These cylinders can not be legally refilled unless they have been inspected for signs of stress fractures and declared safe for refilling. Groups with cylinders containing any hazardous gas should consider replacing any such item with one manufactured after July 1990 or tested for any failure in the aluminum alloy.

If you require any further information or have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact the Department of Occupational Health and Safety.