



Southern Africa

Compressed Gases

Association

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SAFETY BULLETIN

Cylinders in the Waste and Scrap Cycle

Over the past few years the Association, in conjunction with the South African Iron & Steel Institute, has been discussing the above subject and various reports have been written. Due to the continuing problems in this area, the Association has decided to issue a Safety Bulletin.

It would appear that there are two main areas from which scrap merchants can receive cylinders that may, or may not, be in a scrap condition. Firstly, from loads of general scrap material delivered to their premises and, secondly, from cylinders that are excavated during construction work.

In the first case, the majority of cylinders should be identifiable. All cylinders in South Africa should have owner's name hard stamped on the shoulder and the scrap merchant should immediately contact the owner of any cylinders they can identify to seek advice and for the owner to collect them. In the second instance, where cylinders have been excavated, the added risk is that the cylinders are generally highly corroded. In this case the owner of the cylinder is probably not identifiable and it is strongly recommended that the cylinder should be left where it is found and the public emergency services called for assistance. One of the most important aspects is to identify whether the cylinder is empty, or full, and what type of gas was last stored in it.

It cannot be too strongly emphasised that cylinders in the scrap cycle could be very dangerous if not correctly identified. Numerous incidents have been reported where lives have been lost due to inappropriate action on the part of personnel and major property damage has also resulted, e.g. when an acetylene cylinder exploded after being loaded by mistake into a steel making furnace. The resultant damage to the furnace was quite devastating.

The Association therefore recommends that all scrap merchants should isolate any cylinders they receive at their premises and immediately take the following action:

1. If the cylinder owner can be identified, call the owner immediately for assistance. The three main suppliers of gas cylinders in South Africa are: AFROX, Air Liquide and Air Products.
2. If the cylinder owner cannot be identified, for whatever reason, immediately call the emergency services for assistance. Failing that, please call the Association on the above number. Remember that this advice could save your life and prevent extensive damage to your property.

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