

## **Hazards of Oxygen Enrichment**

The air we breathe contains about 21% oxygen. Without oxygen we would die in a matter of minutes. It may be hard to believe, but oxygen can also be dangerous!

Every year incidents are reported in which workers' oxygen enriched clothing caught fire. Fires in oxygen-enriched atmospheres start easily and are very intense, so the people injured suffer very serious burns, which are often fatal or cause very severe and prolonged suffering.

A campaign has been launched by the European Industrial Gases Association to run simultaneously in each European country to publicise the common risks and hazards of oxygen enrichment and how to be aware and safe.

Oxygen enrichment gives no warning - the human body does not detect oxygen enrichment:

- oxygen enrichment is invisible
- it comes silently
- it doesn't smell
- it helps to burn fiercely.

EIGA, which represents the vast majority of European companies producing and distributing industrial and medical gases, has carried out studies showing that most of the causes of burns and death by fires in oxygen enriched atmospheres were a result of not following existing safety procedures, such as:

- incorrectly applied working procedures
- insufficient training and supervision
- inadequate management controls

Oxygen enrichment is a critical and hazardous situation. It is the responsibility of everyone who works with oxygen to be aware of common risks and hazards to know their responsibilities and follow safety procedures.

More information can be found in the leaflet:

“Hazard! Oxygen Enrichment”

and training slides:

“Fire Hazards of Oxygen Enriched Atmospheres”