

Safetygram #35

Air Products' Policy on Oxygen Sales to Oxygen Bars

Air Products and Chemicals, Inc. (Air Products) is committed to the safety of its employees and customers. As a part of its commitment to Responsible Care® and product stewardship, Air Products keeps customers and others informed of significant changes in or new information about the properties, safe handling, and use of its products. In continuing with our safety philosophy, we would like to take this opportunity to inform you of a potentially critical safety issue involving the use of oxygen.

Oxygen bars are public gathering places where customers purchase oxygen to breathe instead of alcohol to drink as in a traditional bar. The customer pays the going rate and receives a number of minutes of oxygen through a nose tube. There is also the option of enhancing the oxygen by odorizing with such materials as peppermint, wintergreen, or citrus fruits. These establishments make many claims, including increased energy and alertness. Doctors and scientists have found no medical evidence to support such claims.

Air Products has several concerns regarding the safety of this application for oxygen. Oxygen requires special handling by trained personnel. A misconception is that oxygen burns. It does not burn but supports and greatly enhances combustion. Materials that do not ignite in air may burn vigorously in oxygen, and materials that do burn in air may burn violently in oxygen or in oxygen-enriched atmospheres. The U. S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration has established the definition of an oxygen-enriched atmosphere as being any atmosphere containing more than 23.5% oxygen. Above this concentration the reac-

tivity of oxygen significantly increases the risk of ignition and fire. In oxygen bars, it is possible that oxygen concentration could exceed 23.5% under certain circumstances. Materials that may not burn in normal air may burn vigorously in an oxygen-rich environment. Sparks or other ignition sources, such as smoking, normally regarded as harmless, may cause fires. And materials that burn in normal air may burn with a much hotter flame and propagate at a much greater speed. This could apply to the clothes and hair of people in an oxygen bar if they were exposed to an ignition source. It is recommended that people exposed to oxygen-enriched atmospheres air out their clothes in fresh air for at least 30 minutes before being exposed to a possible ignition source.

Another potential danger is the bubbling of the oxygen through the various odorants. There exists the possibility of health hazards due to the type of material used. The odorizing system could also be a potential area for bacterial growth if improperly maintained. In some instances oils may be used as odorants, adding to the potential for fire.

Oxygen systems demand special care and maintenance. System malfunctions, improper repairs, or contamination can all lead to serious safety issues.

A number of professional organizations have spoken out against the use of oxygen in oxygen bars, including the United States Food and Drug Administration and the Compressed Gas Association.

Because of the above-listed concerns for public safety and Responsible Care, Air Products will not be a supplier of oxygen to oxygen bars.



Emergency Response System

- Call: +1-800-523-9374
(Continental U.S. and Puerto Rico)
- Call: +1-610-481-7711 (other locations)
- 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- For assistance involving Air Products and Chemicals, Inc. products

Product Safety Information

- For MSDS
www.airproducts.com/MSDS
- For Safetygrams
www.airproducts.com/safetygrams
- For Product Safety Information
www.airproducts.com/productsafety

Technical Information Center

- Call: +1-800-752-1597 (U.S.)
- Call: +1-610-481-8565 (other locations)
- Monday–Friday, 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. EST
- Fax: +1-610-481-8690
- E-mail: gastech@airproducts.com

Information Sources

- Compressed Gas Association (CGA)
www.cganet.com
- European Industrial Gas Association (EIGA)
www.eiga.org
- Japanese Industrial Gas Association (JIGA)
www.jiga.gr.jp/english
- American Chemistry Council
www.americanchemistry.com

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