



Canned-Air safety

Canned air is commonly used in offices to clean dust from equipment such as computers and shredders. These products often are used without incident; however, lack of training in proper use can lead to flash fires and injuries

Canned air is different from the air we breathe. The products are made of a gas that is compressed into a liquid and canned. The types of gases used vary, and some are dangerous when used improperly. Some of the more common dangers include:

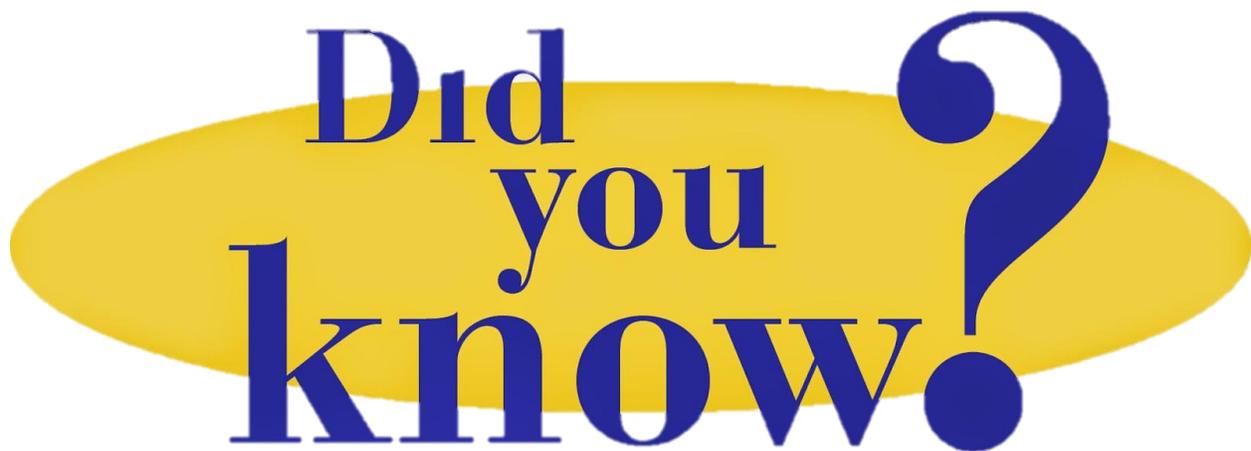
- **Flammable ingredients.** When canned gas is tilted, the liquefied and highly flammable gas can be released into the air and onto surfaces it contacts. This can be especially dangerous in poorly ventilated areas. When a flammable atmosphere is created, flames, sparks and electrical switches can ignite the concentrated gas, causing a flash fire.
- **Frostbite.** The liquid inside canned air can cause frostbite when the skin is exposed to a steady stream. This can vary from an intense burning sensation to serious physical injuries such as skin cracking, and damage to muscles, blood vessels and nerves.
- **Asphyxiation and toxicity.** When high concentrations of the gas are released into a non-ventilated area, oxygen deficiency and possible asphyxiation can occur. The effects of inhalation vary depending on the type of chemical used, as well as the intensity and duration of exposure. When used properly, a serious breathing problem is unlikely to occur.

Simple steps in the workplace can help keep workers safe from these dangers associated with canned air products; Follow these simple rules/steps:

- Find out who uses canned air and in what areas of the workplace it is used.
- Determine whether the areas are properly ventilated. If they are not, move use to an open and well-ventilated area.
- Check the contents of the canned air products in use at your workplace. If the product is flammable, switch to a nonflammable alternative if available.
- Consider whether the use of eye, face and skin protection is needed when using canned air.
- Make sure all canned air users – and those in charge of purchasing – are aware of potential hazards associated with use of the products.
- Make sure users read the label on the can and follow all instructions for proper use.
- Keep Material Safety Data Sheets available for complete information.

Did you know...

- Air forced into body tissues through the skin can cause an air embolism (air bubbles in the blood stream) which can be fatal if it reaches the heart, lungs, or brain.
- Inflation injuries of the intestine can be caused by air being directed at private body areas. A worker in the U.K. died of injuries sustained through horseplay with a compressed air hose. This act of horseplay can be deadly!
- Air blown into the mouth at only 5 PSI can rupture the esophagus or the lungs.
- Eye and ear injuries can occur from a blast of air or flying particles. These types of eye and ear injuries can cause partial or total loss of sight or hearing.
- The sound from a compressed air hose can reach 120-130 dB which is well above OSHA's 90 dB permissible exposure limit.
- 40 PSI can blow out an ear drum from 4 inches away and possibly cause brain damage.
- As little as 12 PSI can blow an eye out of its socket!
- Flying particles can cause cuts and bruises to any part of the body.



Did
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know?