

# Compressed Air Can Be A Killer

*Don't overlook the hazards of all stored energy sources...*

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Many workers use compressed air without even thinking about it. It is employed for a number of tasks including inflating tires, operating air power tools, and paint guns. For the most part; however, the lethal aspects of compressed air are not understood.

Forty pounds of air pressure released from the nozzle of an air gun passing four inches from the ear can cause rupture of the ear drum and/or cerebral hemorrhage resulting in death. The same pressure passing this distance from the eyes or mouth can cause blindness or rupture of the lungs, stomach, or intestines. It has been estimated that only four pounds of direct air pressure will rupture the bowel.

Not only the body openings are vulnerable. If workers use compressed air for cleaning dust off their clothing, the slightest scratch or puncture in the skin will permit air to enter. The affected part immediately swells to huge proportions and becomes extremely painful. Once air gets into the blood stream it can make its way to the small blood vessels in the brain and cause death.

Compressed air can cause injuries in other ways, too. If it is used to blow shavings, dust, filings, or chips from machines, it can blow them into the eyes of workmen nearby or even back



**Like all forms of stored energy, compressed air presents real hazards. You take electricity seriously. You should treat compressed air with respect, too. It can injure or kill.**

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into the operator's eyes. It has been estimated that metal chips with forty pounds of air pressure behind them travel at a speed in excess of 70 miles per hour. Always wear eye protection when using compressed air.

**Remember:**

- Horseplay with compressed air is dangerous and can be fatal.
- Never use compressed air to clean clothing or to blow dust from your body.
- Never point an air hose at anyone and always make sure nearby workers are out of the airflow.
- Check all connections before using and keep the hose out of

aisleways unless measures have been taken to prevent a tripping hazard.

- Make sure you turn off the air before you change tools. (Remember—the lines still have pressure, so be certain to depressurize them.) Then check that all connections are tight before turning the air pressure back on.

- Wear the proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), especially safety eyewear. *Compressed air is useful in the workplace. It is also extremely dangerous. Be aware of the dangers. Know that compressed air can kill you and others if not handled properly.*

# Compressed Air Can Be Deadly

- Horseplay is never a good idea. With compressed air, it is dangerous and can be fatal. From a distance of four inches away, a 40 psi discharge from an air gun can rupture the ear drum, cause cerebral hemorrhage, cause blindness, or rupture the lungs, stomach, or intestines.
- Never point an air hose at anyone and make sure nearby workers are out of the airflow.
- Never use compressed air to clean clothing or to blow dust from your body. All body openings are vulnerable—even the slightest scratch or puncture in the skin will let air in, causing extreme swelling and severe pain. If air enters the blood stream and gets to the brain, it can cause death.
- Use appropriate Personal Protective Equipment. Metal chips with 40 psi of air pressure behind them can travel in excess of 70 miles per hour. So ALWAYS wear proper eye protection. (And don't forget to use hearing protection.)