



Exploding Tanks During Metal Recycling

May 18, 2017

Attention: Scrap metal yards and recyclers

Intact metal tanks and cylinders usually contain pressurized, flammable and/or toxic gases. If you puncture, cut, or crush intact tanks and cylinders, they can violently depressurize or explode, cause fires, and/or release toxins.

To prevent hazardous incidents, have a plan:

- Safely inspect incoming tanks and cylinders to determine whether they are intact or have been depressurized and are empty. Depressurized tanks will have the valve removed (see photo) and a large hole made in the cylinder or tank body.
- Make it a policy to NOT accept or alter (e.g., puncture, crush, cut) **intact** tanks and cylinders. Without specialized equipment, procedures, and training you can't assess whether intact tanks are safe or what they actually contain.
- Depressurized (non-intact) tanks and cylinders can still harbor toxic liquid residue, so set up safety procedures to identify or verify contents before you drain and ventilate them for processing. To ensure you don't create an environmental hazard when draining or ventilating contents, check with your local environmental authorities.
- Walk through the worksite to identify any intact tanks and cylinders that may have already been accepted. Some may be attached to other incoming scrap, like vehicles.
- Create reporting procedures so any intact tanks and cylinders discovered can be safely isolated and removed by emergency response contractors or other specialty-trained and -equipped services.



What you can't see can hurt you!
Assume residual pressurized gas is trapped inside and follow safety procedures to prevent explosion, fire, and exposures to toxins.

Image: Thinkstock

Train scrap and recycling employees to:

- Assume all intact tanks and cylinders are NOT empty and could explode or release toxic or flammable gas or liquid if they are punctured, cut, or otherwise processed.
- Report unsafe tanks and cylinders for safe isolation and removal by qualified individuals.
- Not attempt to remove the valve or puncture or otherwise process an intact tank or cylinder.
- Follow procedures to safely and thoroughly ventilate depressurized tanks and cylinders before they perform hot work on or around them.

For more information about safety hazards and injury prevention:

- [Cylinder Safety training video](#)
- [Guidance for the Identification and Control of Safety and Health Hazards in Metal Scrap Recycling](#)
- [Recycling resources](#)

[Get 1-on-1 assistance from L&I](#) or visit L&I's [Safety & Health webpage](#) for training, videos, and other resources to help strengthen your safety program.

Share this bulletin with others in your industry and safety network.

*This bulletin was developed by L&I's Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) to alert employers, labor groups, and employees to potential hazards associated with work activities. **This is not a rule and creates no new legal obligations.** The information provided includes suggested guidance on how to avoid workplace hazards and describes relevant mandatory safety and health rules. DOSH recommends you also check related rules for additional requirements.*

#2HeB2017