

U.S. Department of Labor

Occupational Safety and Health Administration
Washington, D.C. 20210



January 14, 1994

Mr. Bruce W. Ensworth
IBG
121 Royal Drive
P.O. Box 1824
Forest Park, Georgia 30051 - 1824

Dear Mr. Ensworth:

Thank you for your inquiry of March 29, 1993 addressed to Virginia Simmons, Safety Compliance Officer in the Birmingham Alabama Area Office concerning the acceptability of using compressed air for cleaning an employee's body and clothing. We apologize for the delay in response.

Employers should not allow employees to use compressed air for cleaning themselves or their clothing in general industry situations. The eyes and other body parts, such as the respiratory system, may be damaged as the result of inadequate personal protective equipment, lack of chip guards, and/or uncontrolled release of compressed air.

The enclosed Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standard 29 CFR 1910.242(b) requires that compressed air used for cleaning purposes must be reduced to less than 30 p.s.i.g. (pounds per square inch gauge, 204 kpa). Compressed air used for cleaning must only be permitted with effective chip guarding and personal protective equipment to protect the operator and other employees from the hazards of the release of compressed air and flying debris. Standard 1917.154, which addresses similar hazards in the maritime industry, explicitly prohibits the use of compressed air for personnel cleaning. While this particular requirement is not specifically applicable in the general industry setting, we recognize it as good practice for all industries.

Thank you for your interest in occupational safety and health. If we may be of further assistance please contact the Office of General Industry Compliance Assistance at (202) 693-1850.

Sincerely,

Roger A. Clark
Director
Directorate of Compliance Programs