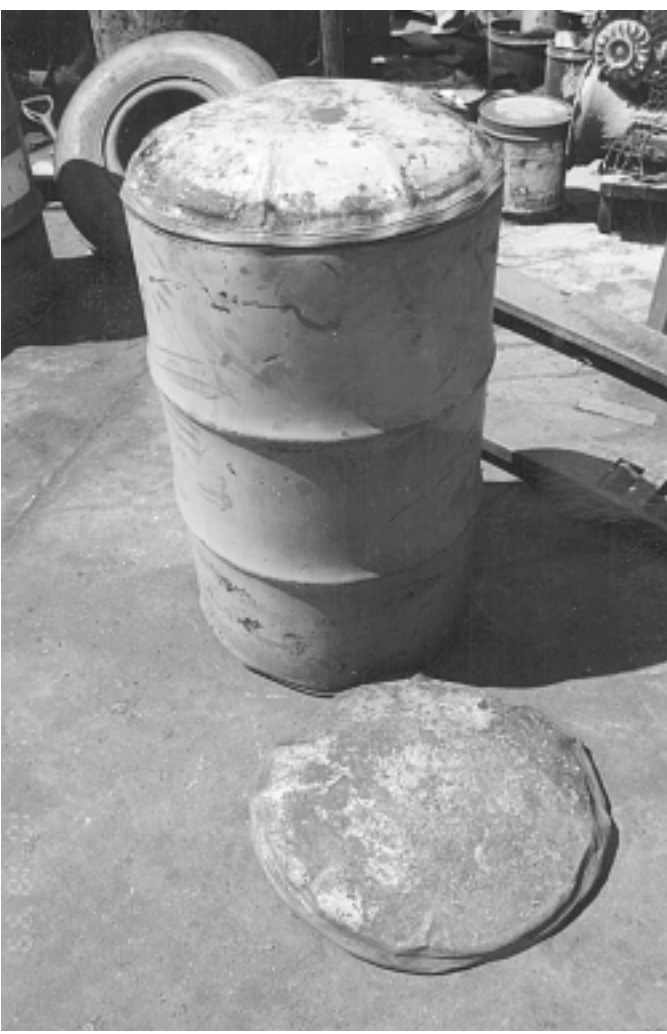


No job is more important.



Safety Alert
 N°5 1999

Don't Cut Steel Drums



During the past two years, a number of serious and fatal accidents occurred when workers cut 205 litre, 60 litre or 20 litre steel drums with oxy-acetylene or welding equipment. In each case, the drum originally contained flammable liquid or combustible material. Cutting the top off any drum is **DANGEROUS** because in many instances those performing the task are unsure about the drum's previous contents.

Contributing Factors

- Investigations into the accidents revealed:
- Drums were not cleaned out properly.
 - Bungs were not removed when the drums were cleaned out.
 - Drums were used as trestles to support other steelwork during oxy-acetylene cutting work.
 - There was a general lack of understanding about the dangers of cutting drums that originally contained flammable liquid or combustible material.

The danger of 'hot work' operations is not limited to containers that have held volatile liquids, such as petrol. Any combustible material, whether volatile or not, can give off mist vapours or fumes that can be explosive.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

- Never cut the tops off drums that have contained flammable liquids or flammable gases.
- Do not apply heat to drums that have held chemicals.
- Make sure drums are properly labelled and recycled by specialist cleaning companies.
- Store empty drums in a well-ventilated area away from work sites.
- Do not cut any drum that is not labelled.
- Never weld or grind near empty drums.
- Do not use drums as welding or cutting platforms.
- Be aware that rinsing drums with water is not a fail-safe method of degassing the containers.
- Provide workers with relevant information about the hazard.
- Provide workers with Material Safety Data Sheets.
- Ensure that drums that once contained combustible materials are clearly marked - **'USED - DO NOT USE FOR ANY OTHER PURPOSE'**.
- Dispose of used drums in an environmentally-friendly manner.
- Ensure that drums are completely degassed before they are cut up for other purposes.

SAFETY CHECK LIST

What has the drum been used for?

- Did it contain highly flammable liquid or gas?
- Did it contain a chemical?
- Does it have a hazard diamond on the label?

If you answer yes to any of these questions - DO NOT APPLY HEAT TO THE DRUM.

Keep the drum away from oxy-acetylene torches, naked flames or sparks from grinding and welding equipment.

REFERENCE

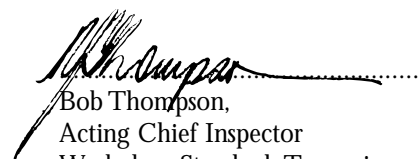
Australian Standard AS1674.1 *Safety in Welding and Allied Processes – Fire Precautions* available Standards Australia outlets.

If you would like further information contact Workplace Standards Tasmania on:
Telephone: **1300 366 322** (inside Tasmania) or (03) 6233 7657 (outside Tasmania),

Fax: (03) 6233 8338

Email: wstinfo@dier.tas.gov.au

Internet: www.wsa.tas.gov.au


Bob Thompson,
Acting Chief Inspector
Workplace Standards Tasmania
November 1, 1999