



Stay Out of the 'Clouds' When You Spark an Arc

Many welding, cutting and allied processes produce fumes and gases that can be harmful to your health. Most exposures occur through inhalation or skin and/or eye contact, and symptoms can include nausea, headaches, dizziness and irritation of the eyes, skin and respiratory system.

What can you do to avoid overexposure?

The American Welding Society, Miami, offers these suggestions:

- Keep your head out of the fumes.
- Do not breathe the fumes.
- Use enough ventilation or exhaust at the arc, or both, to keep fumes and gases from your breathing zone and general area.
- Where ventilation is questionable, use air sampling to determine the need for corrective measures.
- Use mechanical ventilation to improve air quality.
- If engineering controls are not feasible, use an approved respirator.
- Work in a confined space only if it is well ventilated, or while wearing an air-supplied respirator. Fumes from welding or cutting together with oxygen depletion can alter air quality, causing injury or death. Be sure the breathing air is safe.
- Follow OSHA guidelines for permissible exposure limits for various fumes.
- Follow the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists recommendations for threshold limit values for fumes and gases.
- Have a specialist check the operation and air quality and make recommendations for the specific welding or cutting situation.

Copyright 2003 * National Safety Council * All Rights Reserved. Reviewed 5/05.