



Safety Alert

3 October 2024

Hurricane Helene: Cylinder Safety & DOT Update

This GAWDA Safety Alert is issued to inform GAWDA members of considerations concerning Hurricane Helene.

Purpose

This guidance is consistent with CGA P-83, *Guidelines for Cleaning Externally Contaminated Medical Gas Containers*, (<https://portal.cganet.com/Publication/Details.aspx?id=P-83>) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Guidance, <https://www.cdc.gov>.

The healthcare customer has the primary responsibility for cleaning contaminated cylinders that are being returned for refilling. However, **where it has not been assured that the Healthcare facility has completed disinfection of affected cylinders**, consider this guidance.

Warning – Do not use ammonia, amine-based compounds, or chlorine-based compounds (such as bleach). These compounds cause corrosion of steel or aluminum-alloy components or stress corrosion cracking (SCC) of brass.

Warning – Improper use of flammable cleaning materials may cause personnel safety hazards. See below.

Warning – Allowing flammable cleaning materials to enter the valve outlet, may cause personnel safety hazards by contaminating the internal valve components with a flammable material. If this flammable material remains in the valve in the presence of oxygen, fire or explosions may occur. See below.

Disinfection method and materials

- **Cleaning Method** - Wipe (not spray) cylinders with 70% solution of Isopropanol (IPA) or 70% Ethanol in water.
 - Advantages:
 - alcohol is fully compatible with materials of cylinder package and there is no risk of damages.
 - no need to rinse the surface after cleaning as alcohol evaporates and will not remain on the surface
 - Disadvantage:
 - alcohol vapors are highly flammable and in an oxygen environment it must be ensured that there is proper ventilation and sufficient time to dry before further processing of cylinder package. Cleaning should be done during prefilling phase in an area where filling or post fill checks are not executed
 - Important:
 - Ensure that the cylinder valve is closed and not accidentally opened during cleaning
 - For each cylinder a new wipe should be used. Do not reuse wipes between cylinders

Key procedural steps

Key steps to be followed:

- Spraying is prohibited as the disinfection agent can get into hidden cavities where it is not easily removed leading to damage to the valve. If using a spray disinfectant, spray onto a cloth to use as a wipe.
- Wipe off the surface with limited amount of disinfection solution to ensure that there is no excess of the liquid on the valve surface
- Each cylinder should use a new wipe. Do not reuse wipes between cylinders
- Wiping by damp cloth (drinking water) must be done to remove the disinfection agent from the surface to eliminate negative impact on cylinder/valve materials
- Disinfection agent should stay on the surface for at least 60 seconds to destroy virus but must be rinsed within 2-3 minutes (total time is 60+120 seconds) to prevent negative impact on cylinder/valve materials

DOT Update

[North Carolina Executive Order 315 for Tropical Storm Helene | FMCSA \(dot.gov\)](#)

Hours of service exemption applies to: vehicles transporting loads that are for use in (1) providing direct assistance supporting emergency relief efforts including transporting essential fuels, food, water, non-alcoholic beverages, medical supplies, feed for livestock and poultry, (2) transporting livestock, poultry, and crops ready to be harvested, or (3) the restoration of utility and transportation services in response to Helene in North Carolina and affected states for fourteen (14) days.