



October 14 — Turn It On Before You Start

Employee was welding aluminum steps and had a ventilator present at the work area. But the employee forgot to turn on the ventilator. Leaving them unprotected with hazardous fumes.

The employee was alerted that their ventilator was not turned on. They proceeded to stop working to turn on the ventilator.

## Learning: Turn the Control On Before You Begin

Welding creates fumes that need to be controlled at the source. In this observation, the employee was welding aluminum steps and had a ventilator positioned at the work area. The equipment needed to provide ventilation was there, but it had not been turned on. That meant the employee was working without the protection the ventilator was intended to provide.

The condition was noticed and brought to the employee's attention. The employee responded appropriately by stopping the work and turning on the ventilator before continuing. This is an important part of the lesson: when a required control is not in place, stopping the job to correct it is the right action.

It is easy to look at a work area and see that the necessary equipment is present and assume the job is ready to go. But available and active are two different things. A ventilator sitting next to the work does not control fumes until it is operating.

This same thinking applies to many of the controls we use every day. Before starting a task, take a moment to verify that the controls you are relying on are actually in place and functioning. If something is missing, turned off, or not being used as intended, stop and correct it before continuing.

The few seconds spent checking a control before starting the job can prevent an exposure that lasts much longer.

## Hazards

- Welding fumes
- Exposure to hazardous fumes when ventilation is not operating
- Starting work before required controls are active
- Relying on equipment that is present but not turned on
- Failing to verify controls before beginning the task.

## Words of Wisdom

A control only provides protection when it is being used as intended. Don't assume the job is ready because the equipment is there. Verify that the control is active before you begin.

## Pause and Think

- What hazards will this task create?
- What controls are required before I begin?
- Is the ventilation equipment positioned correctly and turned on?
- Have I actually verified that the control is working?
- If I discover a control is not in place, will I stop and correct it before continuing?

## Closing Thought

Before the first spark, make sure the controls that protect you are ready to do their job.

**See Something • Say Something • Do Something**