



SHARP START



October 30 — Stop When You See the Fumes

Workers were welding aluminum trying to set their machine on the proper heat. Unsafe fumes were coming off the metal, which could cause respiratory problems.

The employees were asked to pause their work. Then they proceeded to get a fumes extractor to where they're work is taking places.

Learning: Don't Work Through an Exposure

Welding can produce fumes, and the work environment can change as the welding process and conditions change. In this observation, employees were welding aluminum while working to determine the proper heat setting for the machine. During the work, fumes were coming off the metal that could create a respiratory exposure.

Instead of continuing to work through the fumes, the employees were asked to **pause the work**. They then obtained a fume extractor and brought it to the location where they were working.

This is a good example of recognizing an exposure and taking action before continuing the task. The employees didn't have to wait for someone to become uncomfortable or for the work to be completed before addressing the fumes. The work was paused, the appropriate control was obtained, and the employees could then continue with ventilation in place.

It's also a reminder that the conditions we start a job with may not be the conditions we have a few minutes later. If something changes and we begin seeing fumes or another exposure that wasn't adequately controlled, **that's a reason to stop and reassess the work.**

The goal isn't to simply finish the task. The goal is to recognize when a control is needed and put that control in place before continuing.

Hazards

- Welding fumes
- Respiratory exposure
- Fumes accumulating around the work area
- Continuing work while exposure is present
- Inadequate ventilation for the task

Words of Wisdom

Don't get used to working through exposure. If you see fumes that aren't being adequately controlled, pause the work, address the condition, and then continue.

Pause and Think

- What fumes or exposures could this task create?
- Can I see or otherwise recognize an exposure developing?
- Is the ventilation adequate for the work I'm doing?
- What should I do if the conditions change while I'm working?
- Am I willing to pause the job until the right control is in place?

Closing Thought

You don't have to finish the job before you address an exposure. Stop, control the condition, and then get back to work.

See Something • Say Something • Do Something