

Position Statement No. 15

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Medical Breathing Air for Use in Fire Bunkers

ANZIGA

ANZIGA is the peak industry group for the manufacture and distribution of gases in Australia and New Zealand. As a leading industry association, ANZIGA promotes the highest standards of safety, quality and reliability.

ANZIGA aims to:

- consult with government authorities and organisations that make policy or prepare regulations and standards which govern the production, transportation, storage, handling and use of gases;
- collaborate with other industry and trade organisations on safety and technical matters, including public programs that relate to the gases industry;
- produce information that promotes the safe storage, handling and use of gases.

The members of ANZIGA produce and distribute gases for the health and medical, manufacturing, food, scientific and hospitality industries.

Summary

At this stage ANZIGA members have agreed NOT to supply customers with any gas for use in fire bunkers. ANZIGA members may consider supply in the future when an appropriate construction standard for fire bunkers is available and fire bunkers can be certified to meet this standard.

Issues of Concern

ANZIGA members have, in recent times, had many requests to supply Medical Breathing Air and/or Oxygen for fire bunkers that customers may be building or proposing to build.

Advice has been taken from fire service departments as well as reviewing other available documentation, and ANZIGA believes that:

- At this present time the building of emergency fire bunkers is not regulated;
- The Bushfires Royal Commission interim report has recommended that a standard be developed for the building of fire bunkers but at present none are available;
- A representative from the Master Builders Association has warned that setting minimum standards for fire bunkers may give the false impression of the bunkers' safety guarantee;
- A fire at great heat will create a vacuum and draw any oxygen (air) supply out of a building/bunker if not completely sealed (air tight);
- The risk of oxygen depletion and vacuum can last for up to 24-48 hours, requiring a very large amount of gas to be stored.
- Large amounts of gas stored in a sealed environment pose many safety concerns.

For the reasons mentioned above, ANZIGA members have decided not to participate in supplying customers with any gas for use in fire bunkers at this stage. When further information is available and/or a construction standard for fire bunkers is in place allowing their certification to this standard, ANZIGA members will reconsider this position.

The Australia New Zealand Industrial Gas Association

CONTACTS:

Australia and New Zealand Industrial Gas Association (ANZIGA)

ACN 003 067 178
Level 10, 10 Queens Street, Melbourne, Victoria.
Telephone: +61 3 9426 3812
Email: office@anziga.org

Member Companies in Australia:

Air Liquide Australia Limited

ABN 57 004 385 782
380 St. Kilda Road
Melbourne VIC 3004 Australia
Adelaide: (08) 8209 3600
Brisbane: (07) 3246 6363
Darwin: (08) 8947 1184
Launceston: (03) 6334 9666
Melbourne: (03) 9290 1100
Perth: (08) 9329 1234
Sydney: (02) 9892 9777
Air Liquide Healthcare:
(02) 9364 7474
Emergency Number:
1800 812 588

BOC Limited

ABN 95 000 029 729
Riverside Corporate
Park
10 Julius Ave
North Ryde NSW 2113
Australia
Telephone: 131 262
Facsimile: 132 427
Emergency Number:
1800 653 572

Coregas Pty Ltd

ABN 32 001 255 312
66 Loftus Road
Yennora NSW 2161
Australia
Telephone:
1800 807 203
Emergency Number
1300 657 070

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