

Management Responsibility

Tough Challenges on Managers !

Management Responsibility in a new Dimension

Meeting the latest safety standards in pneumatic applications

Increased awareness of the need to ensure the health and safety of the users of pneumatic equipment has led to unprecedented levels of industry regulation. For example, the Corporate Manslaughter Act is now in force, placing even greater responsibility with business owners to ensure the safety of their employees. The repercussions are serious, potentially including heavy fines, damaging publicity and even the possibility of criminal charges for managers.

Likewise, as of 2009, ISO 4414 will integrate EN 983 and safety standard 2006/42/EC, as well as additional standards for machine safety, to become EN ISO 4414 (ISO 4414 outside of Europe). This will become the primary standard for workplace safety, requiring stringent measures to be taken to increase the safety of pneumatic applications.

Achieving a thorough understanding the new regulations and guidelines can be difficult and time consuming. This whitepaper offers a starting point for those people responsible for ensuring the proper health & safety practices are implemented and adhered to throughout their organisation.

The new standards

- The Corporate Manslaughter Act

The Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act (CMA) is now in force. The act requires business owners to ensure their employees work in compliance with the relevant health & safety standards, for example, by providing them with the necessary training and equipment.

As a result there is now the potential for serious penalties if, following a death in the workplace, the business is found by a jury to have behaved negligently. These penalties can include:

§ fines of up to 10% of the average annual turnover of the business. This is a considerably bigger proportion than has typically been applied previously.

§ publicity orders, which can be used to force a business to publicise its misconduct by posting information on its website, writing to shareholders and placing advertisements in the media. The repercussion of this can be even more devastating for a business than a heavy fine, impacting the share price and the potential for attracting new business.

§ company managers or directors being punished individually, with, for example, prosecution, a fine or even a prison sentence.

With such potentially damaging consequences to incidents of negligence, the CMA has made it vital for businesses to consider to health & safety at the highest level, regardless of the size of a business.

- The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER)

The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER) came into force in December 1998. PUWER states that employees must be provided with a safe working environment and equipment that is:

§ suitable for use, and for the purpose and condition in which it is used.

§ maintained in a safe condition for use so that people's health and safety is not at risk.

§ inspected in certain circumstances to ensure that it is, and continues to be, safe for use.

Management should also ensure that risks created by the use of the equipment are eliminated where possible or controlled by taking appropriate hardware measures.

- EN ISO 4414 / ISO 4414

In 2009, ISO 4414 will become EN ISO 4414 (ISO 4414 outside of Europe), replacing both EN 983:1996 and BS ISO 4414:1998 as the primary safety standard for pneumatic applications.

The changes will include a number of important refinements and revisions to increase operator safety still further. Perhaps most pertinent to the managers and operators of applications using compressed air is the section on the failure of hose assemblies and plastic piping (EN ISO 4414 §5.4.5.11.1 / ISO 4414 §5.4.5.11.1). The proposed revision states that when the failure presents a whiplash hazard, it must be restrained or shielded, and/or incorporate an air fuse. This additional recommendation of the use of air fuses to ensure the safety of pneumatic applications is the result of considerable advances in air fuse technology in recent years.

Air fuse technology

The latest generation of air fuses, such as Protect-Air's HoseGuard system, offer business owners a simple and cost effective method of improving the safety of pneumatic equipment that is compliant with both the CMA and EN ISO 4414 §5.4.5.11.1 / ISO 4414 §5.4.5.11.1. As a result, the safety risks associated with broken compressed-air hose, tubes and pipes can be minimised, protecting employees from harm and businesses from the serious consequences of negligence.

The innovative technology ensures the main air flow is immediately shut off if the volume of air exceeds a set 'value', which is factory preset to allow normal air consumption when using air tools. If

the air consumption exceeds the set value for the device, for instance, in the event of the air line being severed, then the internal piston instantly shuts off the main flow. An integral bleed hole allows some air to flow through, enabling the line pressure to automatically reset the air fuse once the line break is repaired.

The compact, lightweight devices have been designed to provide a simple yet effective safety mechanism for a wide range of pneumatic applications, system pressures, and hose, tube or pipe sizes. Stainless steel versions are also available for use in sectors such as food and beverage, healthcare, and offshore. The components can be fitted quickly and easily, with no adjustment necessary, to provide reliable, tamperproof protection.

In summary

Both the Corporate Manslaughter Act and EN ISO 4414 / ISO 4414 have been developed to ensure the health & safety of employees by increasing the responsibility of business owners and managers. Both businesses and individuals now face potentially damaging consequences if safe technology and stringent processes are not used, ranging from fines to criminal charges. The latest air fuse technology is among a new generation of systems and components designed to help make it easier and more cost effective for businesses to meet their increased responsibilities by improving considerably the safety of a wide range of pneumatic applications.