

N E W S R E L E A S E

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Cal/OSHA Cautions Employers to Avoid Using Non-Conforming Steam Boilers

Oakland—Cal/OSHA is reminding employers to avoid steam boilers that do not meet safety standards. Steam boilers are used for industrial applications including medical sterilization or parts cleaning.

“Employers are required to prevent potential hazards to workers, and using equipment that meets required safety standards is essential,” said Christine Baker, Director of the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR). Cal/OSHA, formally known as the Division of Occupational Safety and Health, is a division of DIR.

Failures occur when thinning, cracking, scale build-up, poor design, or insufficient water can no longer contain the boiler pressure or when unburned fuel unexpectedly ignites. Defective operational controls that maintain appropriate pressure, water level, and burner fuel flow can also cause the vessel to explode if not properly used and maintained. These hazards can cause severe injury or death to employees resulting from furnace explosions or over-pressure steam release.

“Cal/OSHA has specific regulations relating to equipment’s design and construction, inspection, and operation,” said Cal/OSHA Chief Juliann Sum. “Using steam boilers that are not up to code can cause an over-pressurized release of steam or an explosion. This poses a serious risk to workers.”

Since 1917 ASME has been the international standard for the safe building and operation of boilers which are commonly utilized in wineries and other facilities to sterilize equipment. All steam boilers are required to meet the ASME Section I Power Boiler Code regarding construction, engineering, testing and installation of safety controls for such vessels. Larger boilers may require a Cal/OSHA permit to operate and only by a knowledgeable attendant familiar with such equipment.

Failure to comply with the workplace health and safety requirements can constitute a misdemeanor or felony under California Labor Code sections 7750, 7770 and 7771.

Cal/OSHA's Pressure Vessel Unit is responsible under [Labor Code section 7620](#) et seq. for the inspection of [boilers](#) and [tanks](#). A [letter](#) addressing the required usage of ASME-certified boilers has been sent to California employers and is also available on DIR's website.

Cal/OSHA helps protect workers from health and safety hazards on the job in almost every workplace in California. Cal/OSHA's [Consultation Service](#) provides free and voluntary assistance to employers and employee organizations to improve their health and safety programs. Employers should call (800) 963-9424 for assistance from the Cal/OSHA Consultation Program.

For media inquiries contact Erika Monterroza at (510) 286-1164 or Peter Melton at (510) 286-7046.

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The [California Department of Industrial Relations](#), established in 1927, protects and improves the health, safety, and economic well-being of over 18 million wage earners, and helps their employers comply with state labor laws. DIR is housed within the [Labor & Workforce Development Agency](#). For non-media inquiries, contact DIR's Communications Call Center at 1-844-LABOR-DIR (1-844-522-6734) for help in locating the appropriate [division or program](#) in our department.

