

# Who is Hitting on your Helium Tank?

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*"There is no such thing as too much fun!" Michael Rockwood*

I have always considered myself a fun-loving person and the above quote is true. Some have lamented on their excesses from a prior evening, yet no one ever considered at that point in time that he or she was having too much fun!

Think back to the last time someone started speaking in that unique squeaky voice that adults can only produce after inhaling 'a hit' of helium from a balloon. The sidesplitting laughter that always erupts accompanying the jokester's words and further the wonderment of what is going on for everyone outside of hearing range. We have all been there when it has occurred and many of us will admit we have been the one doing it.

## OSHA and YOUR OPERATION

My vocation is to promote health and safety awareness, conduct executive and line employee education and assist with OSHA policy development. Sometimes I profess to seminar attendees that my job is to give cranial massages. I just want you to THINK. I want you to ask WHY. Why do we do this? And who is doing it differently? In my estimation, the hardest job for anyone in management/leadership is thinking for all the employees.

One of my daily tasks is to visit the OSHA web site ([www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)). WOW, you think, how much fun can that be? As a General Industry OSHA Outreach Trainer, it is just my way of keeping abreast of what is happening throughout the nation. (FYI, the OSHA Web site has won numerous awards and is quite user friendly.)

It is amazing when one becomes familiar with a very large Web site, the number of items that can pique

one's interest. I was researching an item to assist a client and in the process stumbled across the fodder for this article.

## TOMORROW'S HEADLINES

I always thought that having a helium tank in the operation was a great idea. A good revenue producer, the ability to sell lots of balloons for birthday parties and other special events as well as a great tool to promote various other fun events!

That was my thought until I came across the following event that actually occurred.

Imagine the headline of your local paper with your business name followed with

### **Employee Dies of Lung Rupture After Inhaling Helium**

The story continues stating the employee was helping a coworker fill balloons with helium when he decided to inhale the helium directly from the compressed gas cylinder. The compressed helium expanded in his lungs, causing the lungs to burst, leading to his untimely demise.

Until coming across this information on OSHA's Web site I never thought that there was a potential problem by having a helium tank around besides the usual recommendation to ensure the tank is properly chained to the wall. (The tank is secured to prevent it from tipping, breaking off the valve

and resulting in a compressed-gas-powered rocket.)

## YOUR JOB AS CARE TAKER OF THE CLUB

What are you going to do now? Teenagers and those who don't want to grow up are always going to have that 'hit' off the helium tank – that is just a fact of life.

Do you put another sign up telling the staff of the dangers of inhaling helium? Do you post the story of the employee who hit off the tank and died? If that is your thought process, the link is: <http://www.osha.gov/cgibin/inv/inv1xp?s=000657718013>

I do not know what to tell you. Back in my days of managing clubs, I have always been one of those who laughed when someone was talking after hitting off the tank! So call me guilty by association!

Now that I know what I know and do what I do, I would recommend that you tell your staff *especially* those forty-something-year-old-fun-loving staff members that they can't hit on the tank any more.

Although I will share the idea, in an effort to keep the fun in your operation, you might tell them that it is OK to hit on the helium from a filled balloon rather than from the tank!

Oh, yeah, and don't forget to obtain the MSDS for the helium!

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