

SAFETY TIP 1

CLEAR THE Air

Every air monitoring program faces several choices that ultimately affect the safety of workers as they perform their daily duties. The following list highlights some common mistakes encountered with atmospheric testing programs.

1) **Wrong sensors for the job.** The most fundamental mistake in an air monitoring program is the lack of proper detection equipment. Confined spaces are different and the hazards found in them will vary. Properly assessing the potential hazards up front and ensuring that the detection equipment can effectively monitor them is essential to program success.

2) **Improper calibration.** Any instrument is only as accurate and reliable as its calibration. The key to a good calibration is usually as easy as verifying that the gas concentration listed on the cylinder label matches the concentration setting for calibration in the instrument. It sounds easy, but instrument users often select a cylinder of gas at one concentration, then use it to calibrate an instrument requiring a different calibration gas reference.

3) **Failure to test the equipment before use.** The only way to be certain that an instrument detects gas is to check it with gas before you use it. Performing a functional test on a gas monitor is a simple task that takes only a few seconds. Why trust your

life to a piece of equipment that you can only assume is functioning properly?

4) **Test it, then forget it.** Regulations require testing the atmosphere before entering a confined space. When the testing is complete, the instrument often goes back in the truck. Why stop there? Atmospheric conditions in many areas can change quickly and dramatically. Keep the instrument available and continue monitoring the atmosphere as long as the work continues.

5) **Lack of training.** Frequently, a worker is handed an instrument, told to perform the atmospheric testing, and sent on his/her way with no additional training or understanding of how to operate the instrument or interpret its readings. Training tools are plentiful. Employees must go to the jobsite with a clear understanding of the equipment and how to use it properly. **PS**

Contributed by David D. Wagner, Industrial Scientific Corp. For more information, visit www.indsci.com.

