

1. NOTE

A +5% price increase was applied across our range of gas control and gas safety equipment on 01.10.02. We had held this back for as long as possible but, eventually, it became necessary to bow to the inevitable and implement our first increase since we began trading.

In spite of this, we consider that our gas control equipment, for example, remains very cost effective:

Two-stage, two gauge, brass regulators with 300 bar inlet rating and outlet pressure ranges of 0-2 bar, 0-4 bar and 0-10 bar for oxygen, argon, nitrogen/air & carbon dioxide are currently priced at £84.00 + VAT each whilst the regulators for helium and hydrogen in the same outlet pressure ranges are now £95.55 + VAT each.

We can, of course, still offer very attractive price discounts versus list prices for single items on larger orders. To receive a quotation please contact:

David Bayliss on telephone number: 01909 501771

or e-mail: david@bj-industries.co.uk

2. MEDICAL GAS SAFETY

There are many of our clients who are involved in the use, handling and storage of medical gas cylinders. In response to some of the enquiries for safety information regarding the use of these gases that we have received over the last few weeks, it seemed plausible that the following notes may be of wider interest.

A. What is a 'medical gas'?

Put simply, a medical gas is a gas product intended for human clinical or therapeutic use, which has been produced to recognised and approved standards for human ingestion or consumption e.g. European Pharmacopeia (EP).

B. Are medical gases of higher purity than laboratory or industrial gases of the same name?

In this context, purity is a somewhat misleading word. Medical gases have to be produced to different quality and traceability standards to many other gases and whilst compliance with the standard for a particular gas (in terms of the acceptable levels of contaminant types and quantities, moisture content, etc.) must always be rigorously ensured it is possible to obtain far higher absolute gas purities via the suppliers of special gases. Of course, very high [absolute] gas purity will NOT confer medical status. It is more straightforward to think of a medical gas as a pharmaceutical product and all other gases of non-pharmaceutical grade.

C. Is there an easy way to spot the difference?

Whilst medical gas cylinders have somewhat different colour-coded paintwork and in many cases a different valve outlet type (e.g. pin-index). The easiest and most important

thing to check is the batch label. Like all gas cylinders, medical gases must have a shoulder label or collar for product name, pressure, hazard, etc. identification purposes. Medical gas cylinders must also have a label that confers their medical or pharmaceutical status - these are usually computer printed, self-adhesive paper labels found on the valve or shoulder and provide confirmation of: BATCH NUMBER (for traceability in the event of a product recall), CYLINDER SIZE CODE LETTER AND PRODUCT TYPE (this can be checked to ensure that you have the correct batch label for actual gas type and cylinder size), FILL DATE AND EXPIRY DATE (for stock management, the oldest filling dates should be used first and gas that has gone beyond its expiry date should not be used for human therapy but should be returned to the supplier).

D. Can I use laboratory or industrial grade gas control equipment (regulators, etc.) to control the supply of medical gases to an application?

Unless the 'application' involves the gas being ingested or consumed by a person then (subject to pressure rating, material compatibility, etc.) the short answer is yes.

If, however, the medical gas in question is going to be administered to a person then the gas control equipment must be of 'medical grade'.

E. What makes medical gas regulators and the like different or special as compared to other items of gas control equipment?

Not surprisingly, as we have seen with the production and labelling of the medical gases themselves, the answer to this is about traceability and applicable standards. Medical gas regulators, etc. carry unique serial numbers (in addition in our case to the serial number on the RegTag) for traceability. As they are 'medical devices,' traceability in the event of a mishap, product recall, etc. would be essential. Also, medical gas regulators must be 'CE' marked in accordance with the applicable regulations whilst laboratory and industrial grade regulators escape CE marking in accordance with the Pressure Equipment Directive.

F. Are medical gas regulators expensive compared to laboratory and industrial gas regulators?

Given the regulations, marking, traceability, etc. outlined above it seems logical that such equipment would be very expensive. It may be surprising to find out that it isn't or shouldn't really be. We supply a complete range of medical gas control equipment and although like for like comparisons are difficult to make medical grade equipment is usually only around 20% more expensive than laboratory or industrial grade counterpart item.

Enquiries or requests for additional information should be directed to:

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You may recall that sometime back I reported on the curious case of a publicity stunt by BRMB (a radio station in Birmingham) that involved 'contestants' sitting on blocks of dry ice. It would seem that some of these unfortunates spent up to ten weeks in hospital as a result and the courts have fined BRMB £15,000 as a result of the frostbite injuries sustained by these hapless individuals. This judgement will, doubtless, pave the way for the victims claims for damages in the civil courts.

Best regards and belated New Year best wishes, David.