

Guidance on Safe Pressure Systems

This leaflet provides an outline of the requirements of the Pressure Systems and Transportable Gas Containers Approved Code of Practice (ACoP). It cannot cover all aspects of the ACoP and further information may be obtained by reading the literature listed at the end of the leaflet, or by contacting the Health and Safety Inspectorate.

does the approved code of practice apply to you?

- Does the plant contain compressed gas (such as compressed air or liquefied gas) at a pressure greater than 0.5 bar (about 7.25 psi) above atmospheric? If the plant contains steam, see below.
- Is there a pressure vessel in the system?
- Is the plant used at work by employees and/or the self employed?

If the answer to these questions is “yes”, the ACoP will probably apply. However, the ACoP applies to all steam systems with a pressure vessel used at work irrespective of pressure.



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what are the basic requirements?

The ACoP requires users to:

- establish the safe operating limits of the plant;
- have a suitable written scheme drawn up or certified by a competent person for the examination at appropriate intervals of most pressure vessels and all safety devices, and any pipework which is potentially dangerous. The user may seek the advice of any competent person when deciding what vessels and parts of the pipework need to be included in the scheme;
- arrange to have examinations carried out by a competent person at the intervals set down in the scheme;
- provide adequate operating instructions to ensure the plant is operated within its safe operating limits, and emergency instructions;
- ensure that the plant is properly maintained;
- keep adequate records of the most recent examination and any manufacturer's records supplied with new plant.

Note: the competent persons referred to above do not have to be the same in each case.

what is meant by safe operating limits?

- Basically they are the upper limits of pressure and temperature for which the plant was designed to be operated safely.
- The upper limit of pressure will be the maximum permissible working pressure on the most recent examination report, or the manufacturer's safe working pressure as stated in his manual, instruction sheet, or on the maker's plate for the plant itself.
- The competent person will review and reassess the safe operating limits when the plant is examined. They should always be reassessed when the plant or part of it is repaired or modified.

who draws up or certifies the written scheme of examination?

Written schemes of examination may be drawn up or certified by a competent person. Associations of independent inspection organisations can provide lists of members who are competent to draw up or certify as suitable the written scheme of examination. In addition some manufacturers may be competent to issue a written scheme with new plant.

what is meant by a competent person?

The references to a competent person in the ACoP should be taken to mean an organisation employing individuals who are competent to carry out the relevant duties. Such organisations must accept responsibility for the work of these individuals.

who is competent to carry out examinations?

An organisation is competent to examine a pressure system under the ACoP only if it employs staff with adequate practical and theoretical knowledge to assess the actual condition of the plant, and whether it will not cause danger in the period up to the next examination when properly used.

how do you provide operating instructions?

The operating manual supplied, for example, by a boiler manufacturer or the instruction manual supplied, for example, by a maker of air compressing plant provide the basis; but this will need to be supplemented by on-the-job training and supervision for new staff.

how do you ensure the pressure system is properly maintained?

The manufacturer's servicing instructions should be carried out at the recommended intervals and obvious faults attended to when they develop.

what records do you need to keep?

- the written scheme;
- the latest examination reports;
- any test and examination reports from manufacturers and suppliers relating to plant covered by the written scheme. It is also helpful to keep a record of maintenance work, routine checks and modifications carried out between examinations.

Do you need to scrap older plant?

Older plant which does not meet present standards of construction can continue to be used provided that the examination report from the competent person confirms that there is no risk of danger.

when do you have to comply with the approved code of practice?

Users or owners of pressure systems must comply with the Approved Code of Practice as from 1st October 1997.

reference

Safety of Pressure Systems and Transportable Gas Containers Approved Code of Practice ACoP 3.

Health and Safety Inspectorate's leaflet 'Safety of Pressure Systems - A Guidance on Written Schemes of Examination'.

safe pressure systems

pressure systems - duties of users and owners

