

# Workplace Health and Safety Bulletin



## Manufacturers' Specifications and the Repair of Blowout Preventers

### Blowout preventers

Recent work site inspections performed by Occupational Health and Safety Officers from Alberta Employment and Immigration, discovered that a number of blowout preventers (BOPs) used in the oil and gas industry were repaired to a substandard level. BOPs are devices attached to the wellhead that permit the well to be sealed to prevent an uncontrolled flow of well fluids from the wellbore. As such, BOPs are critical pieces of safety equipment that must be maintained properly if they are to function correctly when needed.

### Manufacturers' specifications

Section 12 of the *Occupational Health and Safety(OHS) Regulation* - governing occupational health and safety practices at Alberta workplaces - requires employers to ensure that machinery, including equipment such as BOPs, be serviced, tested, adjusted, maintained, repaired and dismantled according to the manufacturer's specifications or specifications prepared by a professional engineer. The engineer must be licensed to practice in Alberta.

This does not mean that the manufacturer or professional engineer must perform the testing, adjusting, repairing, etc., but that whoever undertakes such work must possess or have access to the manufacturer's or engineer's specifications and then follow them rigorously. The author of the specifications is considered to know the equipment best and thus the work must be performed according to their stated requirements

**Government of Alberta** ■  
Employment and Immigration

## Competent worker

BOPs must be repaired by a competent worker. The employer is responsible for establishing or determining the qualification(s), training and experience that a worker requires to competently perform their work. The one exception occurs when a worker performs work that falls within the scope of one of the compulsory trades recognized in Alberta. In this case, the worker must, at a minimum, possess a credential recognized by Alberta Learning, Apprenticeship and Industry Training. Examples of compulsory trades include electrician, gasfitter, heavy equipment technician, plumber, welder and steamfitter/pipefitter.

## The problem

A number of recently inspected BOPs were clearly repaired without any consideration of the manufacturer's or engineer's specifications. Such repairs can jeopardize the function of this critical piece of safety equipment and pose a serious hazard to workers at the well site in the event of an uncontrolled flow of well fluids. Such repairs contravene the *OHS Regulation*. Discovery of such repairs can result in an Occupational Health and Safety Officer issuing a Stop Work Order, resulting in all work at the work site being halted until the substandard condition is corrected.

## Specifications in general

While this Safety Bulletin deals specifically with BOPs, the requirement to follow the specifications of a manufacturer or professional engineer applies to all machinery and equipment covered by the *OHS Regulation*. This includes respecting the rated capacity of the equipment and ensuring that the equipment is erected, installed, assembled, started, operated, used, handled, stored, stopped, serviced, tested, adjusted, maintained, repaired and dismantled according to the manufacturer's specifications or the specifications of a professional engineer.

---

## Contact us:

---

### Province-Wide Contact Centre



Edmonton  
780-415-8690



Throughout Alberta  
1-866-415-8690  
(Toll Free)



Deaf or hearing impaired

- Edmonton 780-427-9999
- Other locations 1-800-232-7215  
(Toll Free)

### Web Site



[www.worksafe.alberta.ca](http://www.worksafe.alberta.ca)

## Getting copies of OHS Act, Regulation & Code:

---

### Queen's Printer



[www.qp.gov.ab.ca](http://www.qp.gov.ab.ca)



Edmonton 780-427-4952

### Workplace Health and Safety



<http://employment.alberta.ca/whs-ohs>

Call any Government of Alberta office toll-free  
Dial 310-0000, then the area code and telephone number you want to reach

© 2010-2011, Government of Alberta, Employment and Immigration

This material may be used, reproduced, stored or transmitted for non-commercial purposes. The source of this material must be acknowledged when publishing or issuing it to others. This material is not to be used, reproduced, stored or transmitted for commercial purposes without written permission from the Government of Alberta, Employment and Immigration. This material is to be used for information purposes only no warranty express or implied is given as to the accuracy or the timeliness of the material presented.