

**CGA TR-3—2014**

**THE IMPACT OF AMBIENT AIR  
CONTAMINANTS ON VALIDATION  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AIR  
SEPARATION PROCESS**

**FIRST EDITION**

**CGA**

**Compressed Gas Association**

*The Standard For Safety Since 1913*

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Work Item 13-024  
Medical Gases Committee

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NOTE—Appendices A and B (Informative) are for information only.

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| <b>Contents</b>   | <b>Page</b> |
|---|-------------|
| 1 Introduction.....   | 1           |
| 2 Scope .....   | 1           |
| 3 Potential contaminants .....  | 1           |
| 4 Physical and chemical properties of contaminants .....                              | 2           |
| 5 ASU impact on contaminants .....  | 2           |
| 6 Oxygen concentration factors.....   | 3           |
| 7 Concentration levels of contaminants remaining in oxygen .....                      | 4           |
| 8 Particulates.....   | 4           |
| 9 Conclusions.....  | 5           |
| 10 References .....   | 5           |
| <b>Figures</b>  |             |
| Figure 1—Full range of oxygen concentration factors .....                             | 3           |
| Figure 2—Typical range of oxygen concentration factors.....                           | 4           |
| <b>Appendices</b>   |             |
| Appendix A—Compounds and elements present in ambient air (Informative) .....          | 7           |
| Appendix B—Compounds and elements remaining after the ASU process (Informative) ..... | 14          |
| <b>Appendices Tables</b>  |             |
| Table A-1—Threshold limits for compounds and elements present in ambient air.....     | 7           |
| Table B-1—Effect of ASU process on LP oxygen sump contaminants.....                   | 14          |

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## 1 Introduction

This publication describes how potential contaminants in the air separation process are eliminated or minimized to low level concentrations that pose no hazard or risk in medical oxygen USP or nitrogen NF.

As a prerequisite step to conducting a full risk assessment of the air separation process, CGA conducted a study of contaminants that can be found in ambient air and the impact of the air separation process on these contaminants. Developing an in-depth understanding of possible sources of ambient air contamination and the role of the air separation unit (ASU) in controlling and eliminating these contaminants significantly increases the accuracy of the conclusions developed during the risk assessment process.

This publication is intended to accompany P-8.2, *Guideline for Validation of Air Separation Unit and Cargo Tank Filling for Oxygen USP and Nitrogen NF*, which contains ASU process validation requirements and the associated industry guidance [1].<sup>1</sup>

## 2 Scope

This publication evaluates possible sources of ambient air contamination and the role of the ASU in controlling and eliminating these contaminants.

The ASU contaminant evaluation includes:

- identifying potential contaminants;
- physical and chemical properties of the contaminants;
- ASU impact on contaminants;
- oxygen concentration factors;
- concentration levels of contaminants remaining in oxygen;
- particulates; and
- conclusions/data evaluation by a third-party toxicologist and by industry.

## 3 Potential contaminants

The elements and compounds that can enter the ASU are listed in Appendix A. The list includes nitrogen, oxygen, and argon, which are the desired end products of the ASU process. The list is based on established scientific data, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other governmental sources of data on constituents and pollutants of ambient air, and experience derived from 100 years of ASU operation. Particulate substances, which can be generated inside the ASU, are also identified.

Nearly all identified substances either do not enter the ASU or are eliminated by the actions of the ASU process. A small number of substances have physical and chemical properties that can result in their being in solution in the liquid oxygen (LOX) contained in the low pressure column. Only a handful of the substances found in the LOX have the potential to concentrate to levels approaching a threshold concentration. Industry has established consensus standards for safe operational limits for these substances in LOX. Facility operating practices conforming to these standards result in contaminant concentrations significantly lower than the threshold concentrations that affect product safety.

The starting point for determining the elements and compounds that can reside in ambient air is the EPA *Clean Air Act* (CAA) [2]. The CAA documents identify a list of the 189 hazardous air pollutants (HAP) identified on the EPA website. The EPA does not routinely monitor ambient air in the United States for HAP substances because they are not typically present in measurable quantities. But because emissions of HAP substances are regulated and subject to a stringent permitting process, a starting or inlet air concentration for HAP substances had to be established. For the purpose of this study, a worst case concentration of the U.S. Occupational Safe-

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<sup>1</sup> References are shown by bracketed numbers and are listed in order of appearance in the reference section.