

TO: All PSI-PCI Affiliate Instructors and Inspectors

FROM: Bill High, Founder PSI Inc.

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SUB: Your Service to the gas industry

As I approach the sunset of my life, I am 88 at the time of this writing, I reflect upon what purpose I served. Throughout my life I strived to be a positive contributor. That of course is often difficult to measure. I saved the lives of two small boys, one from the bottom of a swimming pool and the other from the ocean. Although less easy to measure, all PSI trained inspectors and instructors should realize that they too save lives. Each instructor and each inspector should clearly understand that great contribution to the gas industry.

When I founded PSI with the first inspector class in January of 1983 the fatality rate for those handling high pressure cylinders was about 10 each year. Data gathering about cylinder failure was poor. Many were not recorded. We did not have the internet as we do today nor the vast number of trained technicians who now provide cylinder accident data, so the number then was likely much higher. Today, PSI often learns of a cylinder failure within hours of the tragedy and the number is low. Why?

Clearly the PSI trained instructors and dedicated inspectors have made a dramatic difference. Each PSI affiliate can rightly say that they have saved lives and dramatically reduced the frequency and number of explosive cylinder ruptures.

By the 1970's the dive community had made small efforts to train cylinder inspectors. It was however too little and too late. This became clear to me in 1979. In that year I served as the President of the National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI). The leaders of an instructor training class in Japan invited me to attend.

One evening a staff member asked to speak privately with me. The instructor told me he had some months before taken a dive group to an offshore rock staging area. While his divers were underwater, another group arrived and began rigging up. His divers returned and mingled with the new group. One of the newly arrived divers placed his steel cylinder between his legs preparing to lift it over his head. The cylinder ruptured explosively and tore off both legs. Another diver lost a leg, two others were injured.

This instructor then asked, "Hi San, why did this happen?" I of course did not have the exact answer. However, I had seen the cylinders used in the training class and was dismayed at the poor condition. Corrosion appeared on the outside and I was certain also inside. I asked the instructor how cylinders were inspected. He revealed that, no inspections were made.

As I flew home, I decided that I would devote the remainder of my service to the worldwide dive community to learn what there was to know about cylinder safety and share that knowledge. Quickly I learned that cylinder safety through quality visual inspection was needed throughout the gas industry. PSI, Inc. and its cadre of well trained instructors and inspectors have gained the respect from cylinder manufacturers, government, and the general gas industry.

For that reason, I want to express my deep appreciation to each PSI affiliate for literally saving lives.