

A New Era in **MEDICAL GAS** Testing

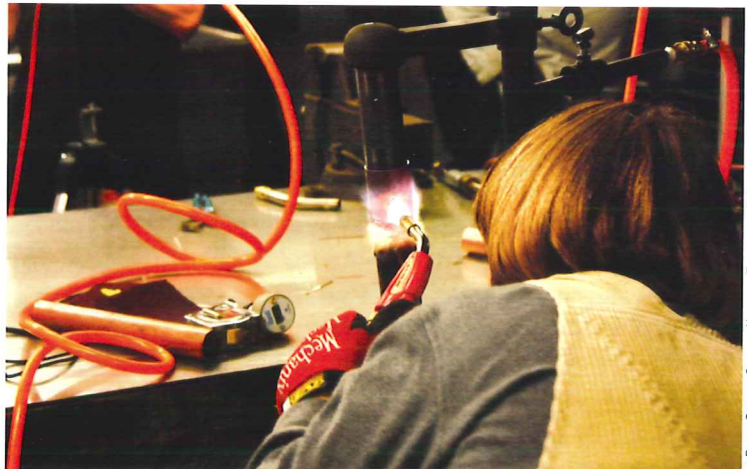
Training and certification is an important element in the new era of medical gas testing

BY DALE HOYES

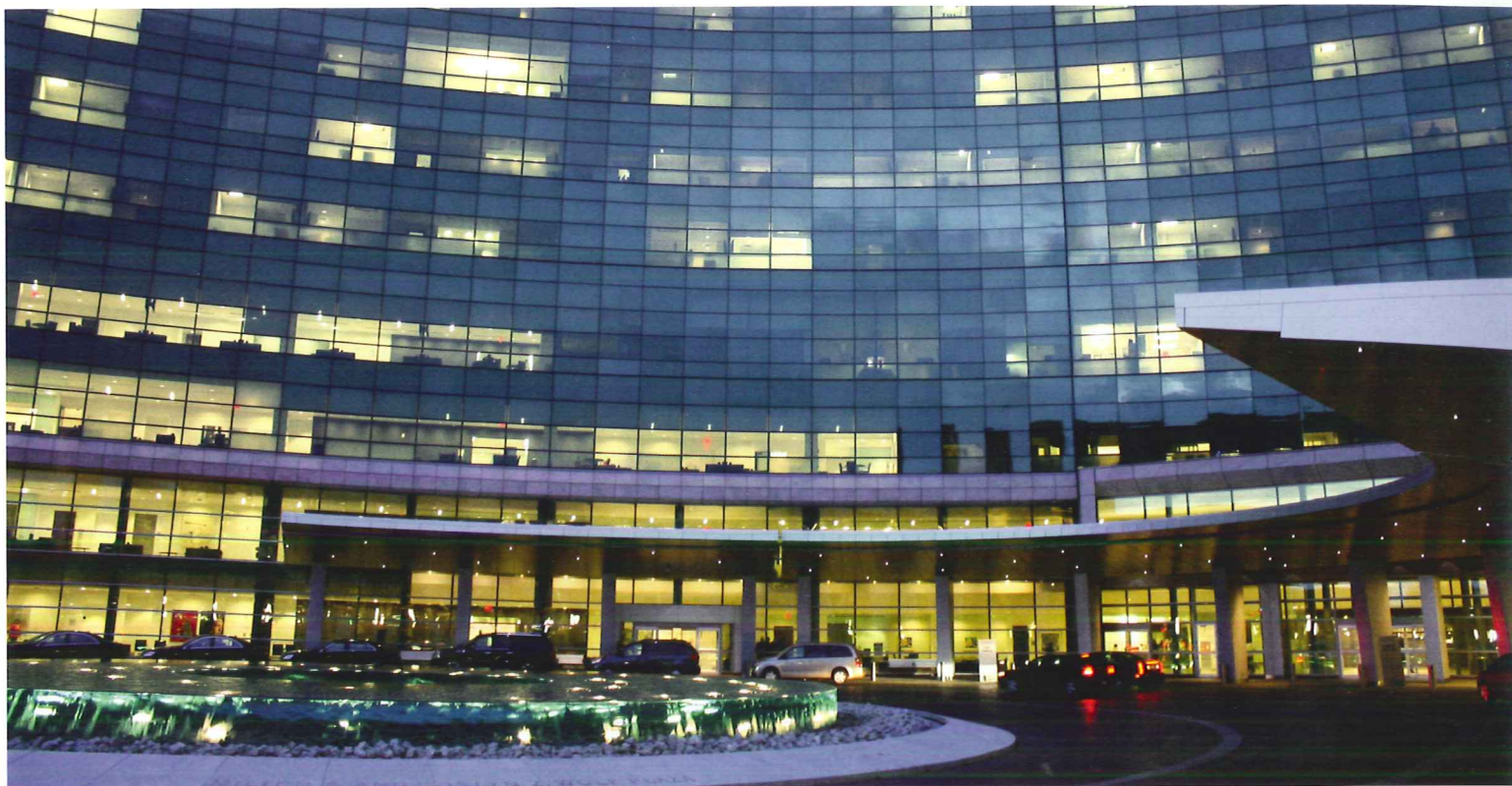
Every healthcare facility nationwide desires to keep patients safe while being treated. The importance of regularly monitoring and testing medical piped gas systems is a critical element of life safety. Emphasis on medical gas systems, by the Joint Commission, formerly the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, a private sector United States-based not-for-profit organization, and other agencies, has been warranted throughout the years because of past hazards and incidents.

Without clean, contaminant free medical gases, operational alarm panels and maintained functional source equipment, healthcare facilities could find themselves in violation of code compliance, or worse, in a situation where patient safety is at risk.

Training and certification is an important element in the new era of medical gas testing. Attaining professional credentials, whether it is in-house maintenance staff, a contracted verifier, or as a tester or installer, has become increasingly important.



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Certifications through classes and seminars, such as ASSE/6005-Medical Gas Systems General Information (for architects and engineers), ASSE/6010 (for medical gas systems installers and brazers), ASSE/6020 (for inspectors), ASSE/6030 (for verifiers) and ASSE/6040 (for maintenance personnel), will not only assist with back-end maintenance and verifications of medical gas systems but also assist with the front-end proper design and installation of new medical gas system projects. The ability to identify design errors and educate installers on proper documentation and required testing, prior to installation and before calling the verifier, is key. All systems should be functional prior to a verifier's arrival and serve as the final step before "turning over" a medical gas system to a healthcare facility. Remember, once the medical gas system is turned over, the facility owns any deficiencies or items that were missed, and the facility's engineering department will be responsible for making the corrections.

Medical gas testing can be accomplished through an internal program maintained by the healthcare facility itself, or through a contracted medical gas testing company hired to give objective findings.

The JC, or other Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) survey agencies, verify the existence of a properly functioning medical gas program to meet specific code requirements and ensure patient safety. Surveys used to be scheduled in advance with a healthcare facility; however, "surprise" visits are not uncommon today, and healthcare facilities must have their program and documentation up to par. It is suggested that a facility become familiar with their verifying

body as well as the testing agencies.

Certain uncorrected deficiencies, or lack of program documentation, could contribute to reduced scoring and lead to decreased funding until the program is brought up to code, thus helping to ensure patient safety.

Testing evolves

Traditional testing methods had only supported the creation of manual paper reports supplied with verification results presented in a 3-ring



binder. But these have now evolved into a new era of medical piped gas system programs. Compliant Healthcare Technologies, LLC has developed a comprehensive proprietary software, CHxProgram, which takes manual compliance monitoring and reporting to a new level. Working in conjunction with the Cleveland Clinic Foundation in Cleveland, the CHxProgram was developed, tested, implemented and continues to evolve with the many facilities that system serves. While physical work-hours still verify the medical piped gas systems and correct deficiencies, the CHxProgram allows on-site access, input and viewing of testing results, and also provides the testing history of all medical gas piped system assets from the patient terminal to source equipment. The CHxProgram features an asset tree for easy tracing of all medical gas assets while providing an Environment of Care Tracer program for JC compliance. With a few clicks of the mouse, a user can determine the source equipment linked to a zone, floor and specific room, anywhere within the facility.

The powerful reporting within the CHxProgram is sophisticated, yet intuitive, and highly informative. The CHxProgram asset management module allows reporting of all assets, testing history and associated deficiencies and corrections. Authorized users can drill-down through four levels of information, sorting to individual zones and their assets. Colorful graphs and charts represent how the facility's program is evolving and improving, which

makes every aspect of managing the medical piped gas system easy. When managing planned and preventive maintenance, the CHxProgram allows any facility to create and manage a Plan for Improvements. ASSE adds validity to testing and maintenance requirements.

Better reporting

Recommendations are derived from the ASSE Series 6000, Professional Qualifications Standard for Medical Gas Systems Personnel, Annex D-Maintenance Procedures. After implementing the CHxProgram at a healthcare facility, traditional deficiencies will be identified, which then allows work orders to be manually generated. With CHxProgram, work orders can be generated daily, weekly, monthly, semi-annually, annually or periodically determined by the facility and ASSE recommendations. This allows the healthcare facility to build and manage their medical gas program more efficiently and effectively.

Pulling multiple volumes of binders for a survey has long been a traditional method of showing compliance of a medical piped gas systems program. New technologies offered by the CHxProgram allow for the creation of multi-site databases for larger healthcare systems. User-friendly applications and the ability to retrieve information from a central location simplify the process. Each facility has a password to view their individual location; however, the director or corporate manager can view all facilities based on administrative rights granted.



This feature has proven very useful during the budget cycle or when facilities utilize one healthcare license. The goal should always be to ensure patient safety through proper design, installation, verification and maintenance of medical piped gas systems. The goal of this new era: to provide not only technologies, but a solid and trusted partnership between a healthcare facility and a medical gas testing service. The new era provides continuous improvement of a facility's medical piped gas systems program and strengthens its ability in becoming a world-class leader in the changing world of healthcare. **BXM**

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