

Gas Cylinders and Safety: A Case Study in Chemistry

by

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Your co-worker accepts a delivery of gas cylinders for use in the dental office. The technician who delivers them finds the couplings on one of the tanks will not connect to the gas line so he changes the coupling on the tank.

When your co-worker mentions this to you, you blanch. You tell her that the couplings are supposed to match the gas in the tank. The two of you notify your supervisor, who responds, "I'm busy. Deal with it. But do it quickly because I need those tanks operative today."

The two of you call the distributor and you have to leave a message for a technician to get back to you. Your co-worker says, "If we can give them some kind of proof that we know it's the wrong gas, we can get them to respond more immediately."

What proof might convince the distributor that the tank is definitely the wrong gas and not that the right gas cylinder had the wrong coupling? Why would the technician be certain of the gas's identity when the coupling didn't match to begin with?

Brainstorming Questions

Write down anything you're wondering about.