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To all persons dealing with boilers and pressure vessels: In April of 2004 the Boiler Section, working along with the United States Chemical Safety Board, concluded a yearlong investigation of a fatal pressure vessel accident in Louisville, Kentucky.

As a result of this investigation it was determined that the events leading up to this event should be made known to all persons working for companies that install, repair or operate boilers and pressure vessels.

The pressure vessel involved had been moved into the Commonwealth of Kentucky approximately ten years prior to the accident. The vessel had originally been used in Kentucky as an atmospheric vessel and later converted to be used as a pressurized unit. The vessel was not stamped to any construction code and had been collapsed and repaired two times in the past with no documentation of the repair or Inspector acceptance of the repair. This unit had a vent line with a shut off valve in it to allow the tank to be pressurized with air pressure. Even though it was only pressurized for a small portion of the process, it fell under the Code as a vessel being operated in excess of 15 PSI. This tank also had a steam coil to heat the product during mixing which, when operated, provided a heat source to a mixture containing 1000 gallons of water. The entire process involved manual application of valve configurations to control air and steam flow. There were no safety controls, warning or relief devices of any type installed on the tank which was not under constant supervision.

In this instance the vessel over pressurized and exploded, fatally injuring the operator and destroying the building which housed the process and a five story spray dry tower.

It is imperative that anyone dealing with boilers and pressure vessels be aware of the danger of improperly installing and using pressure vessels. All used boilers and pressure vessels **must** be inspected and pressure tested prior to entering the Commonwealth of Kentucky or being relocated to a new location within the State, by a Kentucky Boiler Section Inspector.

If you have any questions regarding the safety or installation of boilers and pressure you may contact the Kentucky Boiler Section at 502-573-1708.

Protection through prevention is our number one goal.

Sincerely,  
Rodney Handy  
Chief Boiler Inspector

