

Recommended SAFETY PRACTICES

for Users and Installers
of Industrial and Commercial Fans
AMCA Publication 410-96

FOREWORD

i. This publication has been prepared by the Air Movement Division of the Air Movement and Control Association International, Inc. (AMCA International). The information contained in this publication has been derived from many sources. The suggestions made necessarily should be general in their meaning and cannot be applied literally to all specific situations or conditions.

ii. **The safe installation and operation of fans is the responsibility of the system designer, installer, maintainer, and user.** From the initial system design through the life of the equipment, safety should be a foremost consideration. Some areas which require some special attention include system design, layout and construction, fan performance specification, foundation and installation details, storage procedures, start-up and commissioning procedures, operation, maintenance, and repair. Specific safety requirements are mandated by federal, state, and local codes. *Recommended Safety Practices for Users and Installers of Industrial and Commercial Fans* is published by AMCA International for assistance. System designers, installers, maintainers, and users should consult and properly comply with all applicable codes and guidelines.

iii. The safety recommendations contained herein are intended to assist designers, installers, maintainers, or other users of air moving devices in the safe operation and use of the devices mentioned. These recommendations do not represent the only methods, procedures, or devices appropriate for the situations discussed. Caution should be used at all times when working in or around moving parts.

iv. AMCA International disclaims any and all warranties, expressed or implied, regarding the products sold by the manufacturer with which this booklet has been provided. Further, AMCA International recommends that competent personnel be consulted in deciding what is the preferred or recommended safety procedure in a particular instance where the guidelines contained in this booklet are unclear or in any way incomplete.

v. AMCA International has offered the information within this booklet to assist in the safe operation, maintenance, and use of the products sold by members of AMCA International. In so doing, AMCA International does not assume any legal duties of the designer or manufacturer to instruct or warn about their product. AMCA International expressly disclaims liability for any injury or damage arising out of the operation or use of the product or the guidelines contained herein.

vi. These recommended safety practices were adopted by the AMCA International membership on April 28, 1996.



Power Roof
Ventilator



Wall Exhauster



Propeller Fan



Axial Fan

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Fans and other air moving devices are made in a wide variety of types, sizes, and arrangements. This publication addresses the proper use and installation of industrial and commercial fans. It is not intended to address residential and consumer fans.

1.2 Various "size" factors are important when assessing potential for injury; some factors are: diameter of impeller (wheel, rotor, propeller), rotational inertia, voltage, and current.

1.3 This guide is intended to assist in the safe installation of air moving equipment and to warn operating and maintenance personnel of the commonly recognized hazards associated with this equipment.

1.4 **Handling and installation should always be performed only by experienced and trained personnel who are aware of the hazards associated with rotating equipment. Failure to comply with these practices may result in death or serious bodily injury.** In addition to following the manufacturer's installation instructions, care should be taken to ensure compliance with specific safety requirements mandated by federal, state, and local codes. Industry safety standards and practices published by AMCA International and by other recognized agencies and associations should be consulted and followed where applicable.



Centrifugal
Fan



Upblast Roof
Exhauster

2. PERSONNEL SAFETY ACCESSORIES

2.1 GENERAL

2.1.1 Protective devices are incorporated as standard construction on some types of fans but on many fans, these devices are offered as optional accessories. This is done because the need for the devices and the design required will frequently depend upon the type of system, fan location, and operating procedures being employed. Proper protective safety devices; company safety standards; specific safety requirements mandated by federal, state, and local codes; and industry safety standards and practices published by AMCA International and by other recognized agencies and associations should be determined by the user, who should specify and obtain the appropriate devices from the fan manufacturer or others, and should not allow operation of the equipment without them. Examples of available devices include the following:

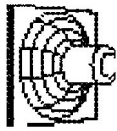
2.2 FAN GUARDS

2.2.1 All fans have moving parts which require guarding in the same way as other moving machinery. Fans located less than seven (7) feet above the floor require special consideration. Specific safety requirements should comply with mandated federal, state, and local codes; and industry safety standards and practices published by AMCA International and by other recognized agencies and associations should be followed.

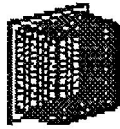
2.2.2 Roof-mounted fans and other fans which are not generally accessible may not require safety guards which might otherwise be appropriate. Where accessibility to these fans is occasional or infrequent, the expense of permanent guarding may be reduced through the use of lockout switches and suitable warnings. In such cases, maintenance personnel



should engage the lockout switch before undertaking any maintenance or repairs. As is the case with other machinery involving moving parts, common sense and caution will preserve personal safety.



*Industrial Type Guard
For Propeller Fan*



*Maximum Safety
Guard for Propeller Fan*



*Screen on Roof
Ventilator*

2.3 INLET AND OUTLET GUARDS

2.3.1 Axial and centrifugal fans are often connected directly to ductwork which will prevent contact with the internal moving parts; when an exposed inlet or outlet represents a hazard, a suitable guard should be installed.



*Centrifugal Fan
Protected by Ductwork*



*Inlet or Outlet Guard
on Centrifugal Fan*



*Guard for Axial Fan With
Non-Ducted Inlet or Outlet*

2.4 DRIVE GUARDS

2.4.1 Fans may be driven directly from the motor shaft or through a belt drive. Where the bearing assembly, rotating shaft, sheaves, or belts are exposed, a suitable guard may need to be provided. Some example guards are shown below.



*Drive Coupling
Guard*



*Heat Slinger Guard
(Shaft and bearing
guard omitted for clarity)*



*Shaft and Bearing
Guard*

2.4.2 Drive guards may be required for tubular centrifugal or axial fans to cover the exposed drive sheave and belts outside the fan housing.



Drive Guard - Axial Fan

2.4.3 A typical centrifugal fan drive guard may vary with the arrangement. Safety guards should be used when drive systems are accessible to personnel. In restricted areas, omission of the back cover may be acceptable.



*Drive Guard -
Centrifugal Fan*

2.4.4 Dampers and their linkage may operate suddenly without warning at high speeds. Dampers and their linkage contain pinch points which should be identified and guarded.

3. HIDDEN DANGERS

3.1 GENERAL

3.1.1 In addition to the obvious hazards associated with the moving parts of rotating machinery, fans present additional potential hazards that are not so obvious and should be considered by the system designer and user for safe operation.

3.2 SUCTION AND AIR PRESSURE

3.2.1 Fans operate by creating suction and air pressure which can be hazardous. Solid objects can be drawn into a fan's inlet and then become dangerous projectiles when they are exhausted through the fan's outlet. **Solid objects can also**



*Special Purpose
Intake Screen*

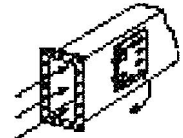
cause fan failure or impeller failure due to imbalance or damage to the impeller blades. Personnel in close proximity to a fan inlet can be overcome by the suction, and drawn into the fan.

3.2.2 Whenever there is a possibility that solid objects can be drawn into a remote intake, the intake should be guarded at all times. Before a guard is removed, the fan should be disconnected and the power supply locked out.

3.2.3 Where fans are installed over an occupied area, safety guards should be provided to prevent dropped objects from entering this area during installation and maintenance.

3.2.4 Access doors to a fan or duct system should never be opened while the fan is operating or coasting to a stop. On the downstream (or pressure) side of the system, releasing the door with the system in operation may result in an explosive opening. On the upstream (or suction) side, the inflow may be sufficient to draw in tools, clothing, and other materials. The power supply should always be locked out prior to accessing a fan or ductwork.

3.2.5 Fan design sometimes requires access doors to be supplied with internal components such as a plug to fill a hole in the fan casing. These doors can often be heavy and difficult to handle. Care should be exercised when opening, removing, and installing these components.



*Bolted Access Door in
Duct*

3.3 WINDMILLING

3.3.1 Even when the power supply is locked out, fans may cause injury or damage if the impeller is subject to "windmilling" which is the turning of the impeller and drive components due to a draft in the system. To guard against this hazard, the impeller should be secured to physically restrict rotational movement.

3.4 TEMPERATURE

3.4.1 Many fans, fan motors, and fan components run at temperatures that could burn someone who comes in contact with the hot areas, including discharged or leaking gases. If this potential hazard is present, steps should be taken so that personnel working near the fan are aware of the danger and can exercise caution.

3.5 FAN NOISE AND ENVIRONMENT

3.5.1 Some fans can generate sound that could be hazardous to exposed personnel. Sound pressure can be measured in the field, but obtaining accurate data is difficult. The environment in which the fan operates can impact the ability to obtain accurate fan sound readings. Consult the manufacturer for fan sound data. It is the responsibility of the system designer, installer, user, and maintainer to comply with specific safety requirements mandated by federal, state, and local codes; and to follow industry safety standards and practices published by AMCA International and by other recognized agencies and associations, regarding personnel safety from exposure to fan noise associated with use and exposure to equipment.



Hearing Protection

3.6 STROBOSCOPIC EFFECT

3.6.1 The stroboscopic effect of certain lights in combination with certain fan speeds may cause a rotating assembly to appear stopped. In these cases, irregular markings can be placed on the moving parts to prevent this type of effect. Personnel should be warned that the fan may be in motion even if it appears not to be.

3.7 SPECIAL PURPOSE FANS AND SYSTEMS

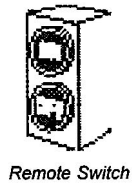
3.7.1 The hidden dangers associated with Special Purpose Fans used in special systems are covered in Section 6.

4. POWER ISOLATION

4.1 Every fan should be installed with a suitable device allowing it to be completely disconnected or isolated from the power supply.
4.2 Many fans are started by remote switches or push-buttons, by interlocks with other equipment, or by automatic controls. Before performing any maintenance, inspection, or other activity which will require removal of guards, ductwork, access doors, etc., or exposure of moving parts, the fan power supply should be locked out and the fan tagged out of service.



4.3 In some installations other equipment, such as gas burners, may be interlocked with the fan so that disconnecting the fan will automatically shut off the burner or other device. Maintenance on systems of this type should be performed only under the supervision of competent engineering personnel and in accordance with applicable codes and standards.



Remote Switch



Disconnect Switch



Lock Carried by
Maintenance Personnel

4.4 In cases where the fan is power driven by a source other than an electric motor, appropriate provisions should be made for the isolation or disengagement of the power supply.

5. START-UP CHECK LIST

5.1 GENERAL

5.1.1 Before putting any fan into initial operation, the manufacturer's instructions should be followed. Transportation, handling, and installation can cause fasteners to loosen, and cause misalignment of fan components. Carefully follow this check list when commissioning equipment.

5.1.2 Lock out the primary and all secondary power sources.

5.1.3 A complete inspection should be made of all of the ductwork and the interior of the fan. Make certain there is no foreign material which can be drawn into or blown through the fan or ductwork. Appropriate protective measures and safety practices should be observed when entering or working within these areas. These measures might include the use of goggles, respirators, or other personal protective devices.

5.1.4 Make sure the foundation or mounting arrangement and the duct connections are adequately designed and installed per drawings and in accordance with recognized acceptable engineering practices and with the fan manufacturer's recommendations.

5.1.5 Check and tighten all bolts, fasteners, and set screws as necessary.

5.1.6 Check the fan assembly and bearings for proper grounding to prevent static electricity discharge.

5.1.7 Ensure power and drive components such as motor starter, variable frequency drive, or hydraulic power unit are properly sized, matched, and connected to the fan.

5.1.8 Check bearings for recommended lubricant and lubrication amount.

5.1.9 Spin the rotating assembly to determine whether it rotates freely, without hitting anything, and is not grossly out of balance.

5.1.10 Inspect impeller for proper rotation for the fan design.

5.1.11 Check alignment of drives and all other components.

5.1.12 Check the belt drive for proper sheave selection and installation and make sure the sheaves are not reversed (excessive speeds could develop).

5.1.13 Check for recommended belt tension.

5.1.14 Properly secure all safety guards.

5.1.15 Assure that all appropriate warnings have been put in place.

5.1.16 Secure all access doors to the fan and ductwork.

5.1.17 Momentarily energize the fan to check the direction of rotation. Listen as the fan coasts to a stop for any unusual noise, identify the source, and take corrective action as necessary.

5.1.18 Switch on the electrical supply and allow the fan to reach full speed. Check carefully for:

- (1) Excessive vibration
- (2) Unusual noise
- (3) Proper belt alignment
- (4) Proper lubrication
- (5) Proper amperage, voltage, or power values.
- (6) If any problem is indicated, **SWITCH OFF IMMEDIATELY.**
- (7) Lock out the power supply. Secure the fan impeller if there is a potential for windmilling. Check carefully for the cause of the trouble, correct as necessary, and repeat check list procedure.

5.2 Even if the fan appears to be operating satisfactorily, shut down after a brief period, lock out the power supply, and recheck items 5.1.5 through

5.1.17 as the initial start-up may have loosened the bolts, fasteners, and set screws.

5.3 The fan may now be put into operation, but during the first eight hours of running, it should be closely observed and checked for excessive vibration and noise. At this time checks should also be made of motor input current and motor and bearing temperatures to ensure that they do not exceed manufacturer's recommendations.

5.4 After eight hours of operation, the fan should be shut down and the power locked out. Check list items 5.1.5 through 5.1.17 should be inspected and adjusted, if necessary.

5.5 After twenty-four (24) hours of satisfactory operation, the fan should be shut down (locked out) and the drive belt tension should be readjusted to recommended tension.

5.6 After commissioning and start-up, the fan should be operated and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's and component manufacturer's recommendations. Some basic guidelines for **WARNING SIGNS** and **ROUTINE MAINTENANCE** are included in Sections 7 and 8 of this publication. These sections are meant as a supplement to other publications and are not intended to replace the manufacturer's instructions.

6. SPECIAL PURPOSE FANS

6.1 Most fans are designed to handle clean air at standard temperatures between 32 F and 120 F. These fans should not be placed in systems or used for other than their design intended use. *Special Purpose Fans* are designed for use in systems that may include extreme temperatures, explosive, toxic, or special gases, material handling, corrosive environments, or other special hazards which should be carefully considered. Specific safety requirements should comply with mandated federal, state, and local codes; and industry safety standards and practices published by AMCA International and by other recognized agencies and associations should be followed.

6.2 Where the system will handle explosive or flammable material (i.e., dust, fumes, vapors or gases), fans of spark-resistant construction should be used.

6.3 Fans connected by ductwork or other piping may contain gases other than air which are hazardous. In these cases, procedures should be established to prevent exposure of personnel working on or near the fan, and by maintenance personnel who may need to enter the fan. Appropriate personal protective equipment as determined by the material safety data sheet, and system operators should be utilized. Appropriate environmental protective measures should also be taken.

6.4 Fan inlet boxes, housings, ductwork, and other system components which are large enough to permit entry should be considered confined spaces. System areas may also serve as low points where heavy gases, liquids, or other substances may accumulate and present explosive, fire, health, or suffocation hazards. Appropriate protective measures and safety practices should be observed when entering or working within these areas.

6.5 Material-handling fans are specially designed to allow the fan to handle a specific type of material without excessive accumulation of material on the fan impeller. Fans handling corrosive gases or erosive material should be checked periodically. If loss of material is evident, the fan should be shut down, power supply locked out, and tagged out of service. The manufacturer or other qualified personnel should be consulted to determine if the fan is within safety limits for operation. To ensure satisfactory operation it is essential to observe the manufacturer's limitations concerning the type of material to be handled by the fan.

6.6 Fan ratings and maximum speed limits are typically based on the use of air at 70 F. At temperatures above the normal range (specified by the manufacturer), a reduction should be made in the maximum speed limit. Information on this reduction and on other precautions to be taken for high temperature applications should be obtained from the fan manufacturer. Personnel working near high temperature fans should be aware that coming in contact with the fan's housing, ductwork, or handled gases could result in serious burns. Where the danger of burns is not apparent, appropriate warnings should be posted. Appropriate protective apparel should be worn whenever working in close contact with heated housings or ductwork.

6.7 Corrosive contaminants can be formed when moisture combines with an active airborne chemical. Fans subjected to corrosive contaminants will corrode; however, suitable protective coatings or material, if used in



the fan construction, can delay corrosion. Protected fans should be regularly inspected to ensure that the protection remains effective. Personnel working in environments with airborne chemicals may require personal protective apparel equipment.

6.8 Where liquid can accumulate within the fan, provide for the installation of adequately sized drains.

6.9 In those applications where there is a potential for chemical build-up (such as grease, creosote, etc.), periodic cleaning and proper drainage are necessary to avoid a fire hazard.

7. WARNING SIGNS

7.1 GENERAL

7.1.1 A change in the operating characteristics of a fan may indicate the need for maintenance. Sudden changes may indicate severe problems or dangerous conditions developing. Investigate any changes in the operational characteristics or unusual symptoms of the fan. Refer to AMCA Publication 202, *Troubleshooting*, for a more detailed explanation of investigating procedures. Consult your manufacturer or other qualified consultant with questions concerning changes observed.

7.2 EXCESSIVE VIBRATION

7.2.1 Operational vibration levels are one of the best indicators of the condition of the blower. Careful observation and monitoring of vibration levels can detect a minor problem in the early stages of development when correction is less costly and easier. Recommended maximum vibration levels should be obtained from the equipment manufacturer.

7.2.2 If excessive vibration is observed, stop the fan and lock it out until the cause is corrected. Check for material build-up on the impeller. Generally this will show up as material flaking off the fan impeller and causing an imbalance which may lead to catastrophic failure of the fan or its components. Excessive vibration can also be caused by looseness in the drive train, loose fasteners, misalignment or impeller damage. Contact the fan manufacturer or other qualified consultant to determine the maximum vibration level if it is not included in maintenance instructions.

7.3 NOISE

7.3.1 Changes to the sound level may indicate maintenance is needed. Some unusual noises often heard include: bearing noise indicating the bearings need lubricant or replacement; scraping or ticking noise indicating the rotating parts are hitting the stationary parts; squealing indicating the belt drive needs tensioning; repeated changing pitch of the blower indicating operation of the blower at too low a flow. If any of these noises or any other unusual noises are detected, their cause should be determined and corrective action taken as necessary.

7.4 HIGH MOTOR TEMPERATURES

7.4.1 Check that cooling air to the motor has not been diverted or blocked by dirty guards or similar obstacles. Check the input amperage. An increase in amperage may indicate that some major change has occurred in the system.

7.5 HIGH BEARING TEMPERATURES

7.5.1 This condition is usually caused by improper lubrication; this can be either "over," "under," or "unsuitable" lubrication. In every case, if the cause of the trouble is not easily seen, experienced personnel should examine the equipment before it is put back in operation.

7.6 POOR PERFORMANCE

7.6.1 Too much flow or pressure or too little flow or pressure is often a symptom of a change in the operating system. A fan will typically operate at the same performance in a static system some typical causes include: operating of the fan backwards after maintenance procedures; filters dirty or not in place; change or blockage in the ductwork; change in speed of the fan (switching the sheaves); loss or failure of the impeller. All of these causes and many others will affect the flow and pressure produced by the fan.

8. ROUTINE MAINTENANCE

8.1 A preventive maintenance program is an important aspect of an effective safety program. Consult your manufacturer or other qualified consultant with questions concerning changes observed during periodic inspections and routine maintenance.

8.2 The fan manufacturer's operating and maintenance recommendations, as well as the components manufacturer's instructions (such as motor, bearing, drives, etc.) should be strictly followed.

8.3 *Maintenance should always be performed by experienced and trained personnel who are aware of the hazards associated with rotating equipment.* Do not attempt any maintenance on a fan unless the fan power supply has been locked out and tagged out and the impeller has been secured.

8.4 When performing maintenance functions which include disassembly of the fan, careful consideration should be given to the size, weight, center of gravity, and lifting means of the fan components. It should also be noted that the outboard bearing on some fans such as arrangements 1, 8, 9, and 10 is often cap-loaded. Removal of the securing means may result in a sudden change in impeller position.

8.5 Historical data is often the best indicator for determining the operational condition of the fan. Maintenance logs which include relubrication, vibration levels, temperature levels, power requirements, inspection, and other pertinent records should be maintained and consulted as necessary when assessing the condition of the fan.

8.6 Under normal circumstances, handling clean air, the system should require cleaning only once a year. However, the fan and system should be checked at regular intervals to detect any unusual accumulation.

8.7 The fan impeller should be specially checked for build-up of material or dirt which may cause an imbalance with resulting undue wear on bearings and belt drives. A regular maintenance program should be established as needed to prevent material build-up.

8.8 Periodic inspection of the rotating assembly should be made to detect any indication of weakening of the rotor because of corrosion, erosion, or metal fatigue. Where signs of deterioration are found, lock out and tag out the impeller until the unit has been inspected and approved by a qualified consultant.