

Guidance and Recommendations for Exposure Scenarios, Risk Management Measures and to identify Operational Conditions under which metals, alloys and metallic articles and mixtures may be safely welded regarding welding fumes and gases exposure

Welding/Brazing produces fumes, which can affect human health.

Welding and allied processes generate a varying mixture of fumes (airborne particles) and gases, which, if inhaled or swallowed, constitute a health hazard.

The degree of risk will depend on the composition of the fume, the concentration of the fume and duration of exposure.

The fume composition is dependent upon the material being worked, the process and consumables being used, coatings on the work such as paint, galvanizing or plating, oil or contaminants from cleaning and degreasing activities.

The amount of fumes generated is dependent on the welding process, the welding parameters, the shielding gas, the type of consumable and the potential coating on the work.

A systematic approach to the assessment of exposure is necessary, taking into account the particular circumstances for the operator and ancillary worker that can be exposed.

General Rules to reduce exposure to welding fumes and gases

Considering the emission of fumes when welding brazing or cutting of metals, it is recommended to (1) arrange risk management measures through applying general information and guidelines provided by this document and (2) using the information provided by the Safety Data Sheet, issued in accordance with REACH, by the welding consumable manufacturer.

The employer shall ensure that the risk from welding fumes to the safety and health of workers is eliminated or reduced to a minimum. Start every new work with an Occupational Safety & Health Risk Inventory.

The following principles shall be applied, unless local regulation say otherwise:

1. **Substitution:**
Select the applicable process/base material combinations with the lowest emission, whenever possible
Set welding process with the lowest emission parameters (e.g. welding parameters/arc mode transfer, shielding gas composition) *
2. **Technological Means:**
Apply the relevant collective protective measures (general ventilation, local exhaust ventilation) in accordance with class number.
3. **Organizational Measures:**
Limit the time a worker is exposed to welding fumes,
Establish and apply Welding Procedure Specifications
4. **Personal Protective Equipment:**
To protect the worker, wear the relevant personal protective equipment in accordance with the duty cycle

In addition, compliance with the National Regulations regarding the exposure of welders and related personnel to welding fumes, their components with specific occupational exposure limit, and gaseous substances with specific occupational exposure limits shall be verified. It is therefore strongly recommended to seek clarification of specific national legislation that may apply.

** In MIG / MAG process , innovative waveform controlled processes generate less welding fumes and particles than conventional processes - The use of such processes can be an additional measure to reduce the exposure of the welder and or workers*

Risk Management Measures for Individual process/base material combinations

According to the welding or allied process and the base material to be welded, a general guidance on *Technological means* is proposed in the table below.

An approximate ranking to mitigate the risk of welding fumes and gases exposure is given for each welding or allied process/base material combination.

The individual process/base material combinations are ranked from the lowest emission ones (**Class I**) to the highest emission ones (**Class VIII**).

NOTE: The International Institute of Welding (IIW) assessed the publication of IARC Monograph 118. Based on the current state of knowledge, IIW confirms its statement from 2011 on "Lung cancer and welding" and encourages all those responsible to reduce the exposure to welding fume to a minimum. It also recommends that to eliminate the excess risk of lung cancer, welders and their managers must ensure that exposure to welding fume is minimized, at least to national guidelines. This IIW statement is posted both on IIW and EWA website.

For each class, general recommendations on Ventilation/Extraction/Filtration and Personal Protection Equipment are proposed.

Class ¹	Process (according to ISO 4063)	Base Materials	Remarks	Ventilation / Extraction / Filtration ¹⁴	PPE ² DC<15%	PPE ² DC>15%
Non-confined space¹⁶						
I	GTAW 141	All	Except Aluminum	GV low ³	n.r.	n.r.
	SAW 12					
	Autogenous 3					
	PAW 15					
	ESW/EGW 72/73					
	Resistance 2					
	Stud welding 78					
	Solid state 521					
	Gases Brazing 9					
II	GTAW 141	Aluminum	n.a.	GV medium ⁴	n.a.	FFP2 ⁵
III	MMAW 111	All	Except Be-, V-, Mn-, Ni- alloys and Stainless ⁶	GV low ⁷ LEV low ¹²	Improved helmet ¹⁶	FFP2 ⁵
	FCAW 136/137	All	Except Stainless and Ni- alloys ⁶			
	GMAW 131/135	All	Except Cu-, Be-, V- alloys ⁶			
	Powder Plasma Arc 152	All	Except Be-, V-, Cu-, Mn-, Ni-alloys and Stainless ⁶			
IV	All processes class I	Painted / primed / oiled / galvanized	No Pb containing primer	GV low ³	FFP2 ⁵	FFP3 ⁸ , TH2/P2, or LDH3
	All processes class III	Painted / primed / oiled / galvanized	No Pb containing primer	GV low ⁷ LEV low ¹²		
V	MMAW 111	Stainless, Ni-, Be-, and V- alloys	n.a.	LEV high ¹⁰	TH3/P3, LDH3 ¹¹	TH3/P3, LDH3 ¹¹
	FCAW 136/137	Stainless, Mn- and Ni-alloys				
	GMAW 131	Cu-alloys				
	Powder Plasma Arc 152	Stainless, Mn-, Ni-, and Cu- alloys				

Class ¹	Process (according to ISO 4063)	Base Materials	Remarks	Ventilation / Extraction / Filtration ¹⁴	PPE ² DC<15%	PPE ² DC>15%
Non-confined space¹⁶						
VI	GMAW 131	Be-, and V- alloys	n.a.	Reduced (negative) pressured area ⁹ LEV low ¹²	TH3/P3, LDH3 ¹¹	TH3/P3, LDH3 ¹¹
	Powder Plasma Arc 152					
VII	Self shielded FCAW 114	Un-, high alloyed steel	Cored wire, not containing Ba	Reduced (negative) pressured area ⁹ LEV medium ¹³	TH3/P3, LDH3 ¹¹	TH3/P3, LDH3 ¹¹
	Self-shielded FCAW 114	Un-, high alloyed steel	Cored wire, containing Ba	Reduced (negative) pressured area ⁹ LEV high ¹⁰		
	All	Painted / primed / galvanized	Paint / Primer containing Pb			
	Arc Gouging and Cutting 8	All	n.a.			
	Thermal Spray	All	n.a.			
	Gases Brazing 9	Cd- alloys	n.a.			
Closed system or Confined space¹⁵						
I	Laser Welding 52	All	Closed system	GV medium ⁴	n.a.	n.a.
	Laser Cutting 84					
	Electron Beam 51					
VIII	All	All	Confined space	LEV high ¹⁰ External air supply	LDH3 ¹¹	LDH3 ¹¹

Notes:

- ¹ Class: approximate ranking to mitigate risk by selecting process/material combinations with the lowest value. Identified collective and individual risk management measures shall be applied
 - ² Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) required avoiding exceeding the National Exposure Limit Value (DC: Duty cycle expressed on 8 hours)
 - ³ General Ventilation (GV) Low. With additional Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV) and extracted air to the outside, the GV or LEV capacity may be reduced to 1/5 of the original requirement.
 - ⁴ General Ventilation (GV) Medium (double compared to Low)
 - ⁵ Filtrating half mask (FFP2)
 - ⁶ When an alloyed consumable is used, measures from "Class V" are required
 - ⁷ General Ventilation (GV) Low. When no Local Exhaust Ventilation, the ventilation requirement is 5-fold
 - ⁸ Filtrating half mask (FFP3), helmet with powered filters (TH2/P2), or helmet with external air supply (LDH2)
 - ⁹ Reduced (negative) pressured Area: A separate, ventilated area where reduced (negative) pressure, compared to the surrounded area, is maintained
 - ¹⁰ Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV) High, extraction at source (includes table, hood, arm or torch extraction)
 - ¹¹ Helmet with powered filters (TH3/P3), or helmet with external air supply (LDH3)
 - ¹² Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV) Low, extraction at source (includes table, hood, arm or torch extraction)
 - ¹³ Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV) Medium, extraction at source (includes table, hood, arm or torch extraction)
 - ¹⁴ Recommended measures to comply with national maximum allowable limits. Extracted fumes, for all materials except unalloyed steel and aluminum, shall be filtered before release in the outside environment.
 - ¹⁵ A confined space, despite its name, is not necessarily small. Examples of confined spaces include ship, silos, vats, utility vaults, tanks, etc.
 - ¹⁶ Improved helmet, designed to avoid direct flow of welding fumes inside
- n.a. Not applicable
n.r. Not recommended

International Standards & EU Regulations

The following ISO standards and European Union Directives address general information for risk assessments of exposure to welding fumes and gases released by welding and allied processes.

In addition, national regulations and recommendations need to be consulted and applied.

ISO 4063:2009	Welding and allied processes -- Nomenclature of processes and reference numbers
ISO EN 21904-1:2020	Health and safety in welding and allied processes -- Equipment for capture and separation of welding fume -- Part 1: General requirements
ISO EN 21904-2:2020	Health and safety in welding and allied processes -- Equipment for capture and separation of welding fume -- Part 2: Requirements for testing and marking of separation efficiency
ISO EN 21904-3:2018	Health and safety in welding and allied processes — Requirements, testing and marking of equipment for air filtration — Part 3: Determination of the capture efficiency of on-torch welding fume extraction devices
ISO EN 21904-4:2020	Health and safety in welding and allied processes -- Equipment for capture and separation of welding fume -- Part 4: Determination of the minimum air volume flow rate of capture devices
ISO 15607:2003	Specification and qualification of welding procedures for metallic materials — General rules
EN ISO 15609:	Specification and qualification of welding procedures for metallic materials - Welding procedure specification part1 -> part 6
ISO 17916:2016	Safety of thermal cutting machines
EN 149:2001+A1:2009	Respiratory protective devices. Filtering half masks to protect against particles. Requirements, testing, marking
EN 14594:2018	Respiratory protective devices. Continuous flow compressed air line breathing devices. Requirements, testing and marking
EN 12941:1998+A2:2008	Respiratory protective devices. Powered filtering devices incorporating a helmet or a hood. Requirements, testing, marking
EN 143:2000	Respiratory protective devices. Particle filters. Requirements, testing, marking
Directive 98/24/EC	on the protection of the health and safety of workers from the risks related to chemical agents at work
Directive 2004/37/EC	on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to carcinogens or mutagens at work
Directive 2017/2398	Amending Directive 2004/37/EC on chromium VI exposure limit
Directive 2017/164/EU	indicative occupational exposure limit values (for nitrogen oxides)
Directive 2019/130	Amending Directive 2004/37/EC on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to carcinogens or mutagens at work

Use Descriptor System according to REACH Regulation

REACH use descriptor system is a system developed by ECHA¹ to facilitate chemical risk assessment and supply chain communication.

Welding fumes and gases are secondary non-intentional byproducts generated during welding operations. As such, they are not considered as substances or mixtures under REACH definition. They are not intended to be used by workers or consumers.

However, occupational exposure to welding fumes and gases may represent a risk similar to the ones of the substances and mixtures regulated by REACH.

The identification of hazards, the evaluation of their risks and the putting in place of control measures to secure the health and safety can be implemented with REACH methodology.

This system has been applied to welding fumes and gases.

The system firstly describes the Life Cycle Stage. The EWA welding consumable manufacturers define 2 life cycle stages: a) manufacture of the product and b) the application at an industrial site.

In addition, REACH uses five descriptors:

Sector of use (**SU**), [NOTE: previously listed SU3 and SU10 have been removed by ECHA¹]

Process category (**PROC**),

Product category (**PC**),

Article category (**AC**) and

Environmental release category (**ERC**)

to describe identified uses.

The applicable descriptors for welding consumables are:

Manufacture of consumables:

SU14 SU15 PC7 PC38 PROC5 PROC21 PROC22 PROC23 PROC24 PROC25 ERC 2 ERC3 AC7

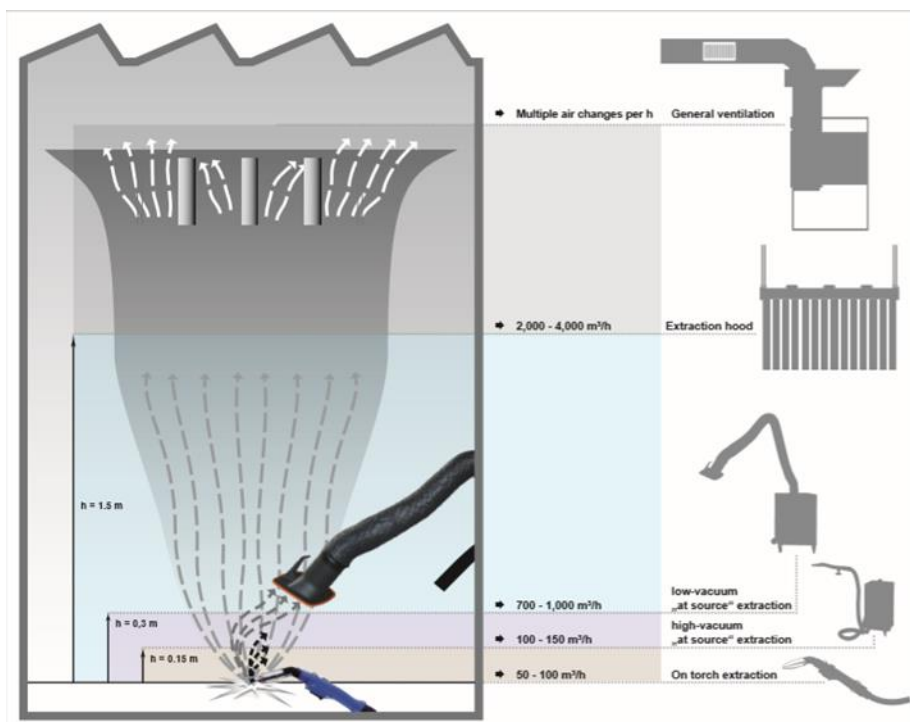
Industrial and Professional welding:

SU15 SU17 PC7 PC38 PROC21 PROC22 PROC23 PROC24 PROC25 ERC5 ERC8c ERC8f AC1 AC2 AC7

SU14	Manufacture of basic metals, including alloys
SU15	Manufacture of fabricated metal products, except machinery and equipment
SU17	General manufacturing, e.g. machinery, equipment, vehicles, other transport equipment
PC7	Base metals and alloys
PC38	Welding and soldering products, flux products
PROC5	Mixing or blending in batch processes
PROC21	Low energy manipulation of substances bound in materials and/or articles
PROC22	Potentially closed processing operations with minerals/metals at elevated temperature. Industrial setting
PROC23	Open processing and transfer operations with minerals/metals at elevated temperature
PROC24	High (mechanical) energy work-up of substances bound in materials and/or articles
PROC25	Other hot work operations with metals
ERC2	Formulation of preparations
ERC3	Formulation into solid matrix
ERC5	Industrial use resulting in inclusion into or onto a matrix
AC1	Vehicles
AC2	Machinery, mechanical appliances, electrical/electronic articles
AC7	Metal articles

¹ Guidance on Information Requirements and Chemical Safety Assessment, Chapter R.12: Use description, Version 3.0 December 2015 (https://echa.europa.eu/documents/10162/13632/information_requirements_r12_en.pdf)

Annex: Illustration of welding fume extraction systems (optional)



Note: Illustration of welding fume extraction systems is only an example. Compliance, with national country legislation, is needed if different

This document has been prepared by the members of EWA technical committees. These members are working for different European producers of welding equipment and welding consumables (which are members of EWA). All EWA technical information documents are based on EWA members' experience and technical knowledge at the time of publication. Such technical information documents provide voluntary guidance and are not binding.

EWA hereby disclaims any liability that may arise from the use of such technical information documents, including, but not limited to, non-performance, mis-interpretation, and improper use of the technical information”.