Recommended Spring Brake Disposal Procedure

The proper disposal of old spring brake chambers is a concern of every fleet maintenance department and repair shop throughout the industry. All retired spring brake actuators should be safely disarmed before they are disposed of to prevent serious personal injury from accidental sudden release of the high-energy spring (which can generate as much as 2700 lbs. of force) in the parking chamber.

MGM Brakes has always recommended that the coils of the power spring be cut with an acetylene gas torch prior to disposal. This simple procedure renders the power spring inoperable, permitting the chamber to be safely discarded.

FIG. 1

Place the single/piggyback or combination/tandem unit in a properly constructed steel container **(see example in Fig. 1—refer to back of this brochure for a quality container supplier)**. Ideally, tandem units should be positioned with the release bolt down (push-rod up), whereas piggyback units should rest with the release bolt up. The container must have openings to expose the head where it is to be cut with an acetylene gas torch. It must also be strong enough to prevent parts from hurtling out should the unit suddenly separate before it is safely disarmed.

WARNING: Before discarding, submerse unit in water to cool. If unit is not cooled, it may continue to emit harmful fumes and could start a fire if placed near combustible material.

NOTE: It is the user's responsibility to ensure the steel container is safe.

Position the chamber so the head can easily be accessed through the holes in the container. Depending on the size of the container, it may be necessary to cut the service push-rod in order to fit a combination/tandem spring brake into the container/disarming box.

WARNING: Never operate an acetylene gas torch without wearing proper clothing and eye protection. Be sure to perform the disposal process in a well ventilated area. Fumes generated by the use of an acetylene torch may be harmful. DO NOT BREATHE THE FUMES.

Next, through one of the openings in the side of the container, use an acetylene gas torch to cut a hole (1-1/2 to 2 inches in diameter) in the head of the brake to expose the power spring. At this point, DO NOT cut the power spring. Repeat the process through the opening on the opposite side of the container. Cutting two holes opposite each other provides the torch with sufficient oxygen for the cutting of the power spring. Now, use the torch to completely cut through one of the coils of the exposed power spring. Cutting the first coil may produce a low pitched "pop" or may cause the brake to jump in the box. Repeat the process through the opening on the opposite side of the container.

WARNING: DO NOT cut the clampband bolts before cutting the power spring coils.

To make sure you have completely cut the power spring coils, use a screwdriver or similar tool to check that the coils are loose inside the head of the brake. **DO NOT PLACE YOUR HANDS OR FINGERS INSIDE THE CONTAINER.** If the coils can be moved, the brake has been rendered harmless and can be discarded.

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