

Save Your Breath: Avoid Medical-Grade Nitrogen & Oxygen Run-outs

When lives are at stake, the last thing you need to be worried about is your inventory of critical oxygen or nitrogen. Hospitals and medical centers rely on a steady supply of these gases for a range of needs, including respiratory treatments, surgical procedures and storing and preserving tissues, cells and blood. And, any interruption of gas flow directly impacts the care of your patients.

So how can you make sure you never have to worry about your inventory? Airgas life science and healthcare experts Michael Craig, Jason Walling and David Larson weigh in on some best practices for healthcare institutions to help ensure that you never have to worry about your inventory running out.

1. **Have a back-up plan.** A manifold system is a great way to prevent shortages by creating built-in redundancy.
2. **Save your breath.** Avoid gas waste by turning flow valves off when you're finished.
3. **Check for leaks.** Regularly check to ensure fittings aren't leaking in hospital rooms.
4. **Make a list.** Require staff to follow post-surgery and nursing staff checklists to make sure flowmeters are turned off or disconnected properly.
5. **Check in daily.** Confirm there's enough gas on hand to last through the day's operations.
6. **Evaluate your equipment.** Verify that the size of the tanks is appropriate for the volume needed. Sometimes when bulks tanks are added, the system is not evaluated for several years after. As that hospital grows, the existing system cannot efficiently accommodate the increased needs.
7. **Always be in compliance.** NFPA requires keeping 24 hours' worth of back-up product onsite with an additional 96 hours' worth of gas accessible.
8. **Be aware of demand fluctuations.** Prepare ahead of time by tracking fluctuations so that you can uncover trends and triggers that increase demand.

Make sure you're covered

Having a consistent and thorough methodology to regularly assess your gas equipment and supply avoids waste and prevents shortages.

A good rule of thumb for keeping your system up to date with a steady stream of gas is to regularly evaluate your operation and alert your supplier to any changes, expansions or upgrades to your operation. When your requirements change, such as the addition of a new wing or hospital beds, it's often necessary to upgrade your equipment to stay on top of increased demands. Staying up to date on your equipment along with these recommendations will give you the peace of mind to focus on patient care without worrying about your gas supply.