

You Decide: Are You Ready for Bulk Gas Supply?

Runouts. High costs. Constantly swapping out cylinders. These are just a few of the headaches that you may be dealing with every day. Not only are these issues frustrating, but they also have a direct effect on efficiency and costs. For businesses that rely on a steady stream of gas, mode of supply is one of the most important factors for running an efficient operation. Making sure you have what you need when you need it is key. So, how do you make sure you always have the product you need? Bulk gas supply may be the answer.

We turned to an expert and asked Henry Battle, Vice President of Materials and Power Markets at Airgas for his advice on how to determine if and when your operation would benefit from bulk gas supply.

Here are some guidelines to help you determine if you should consider bulk gas supply for your business.

- Focus on the volume. The decision to use bulk supply for industrial gas is driven by the volume used in a period of time and the type of gas in question. Once the consumption reaches a certain volume, cylinders and liquid dewars are not efficient and could disrupt the business.
- Evaluate your processes. Conduct regular reviews of your operation and your applications. This will help to determine if you are using products effectively for your current production and if you need to make adjustments for future production requirements.

And ask yourself these questions:

- Is there a need for a more secure form of distribution? Bulk systems are designed to perform on a continuous basis.
- Are there plans to expand production requiring more volume? There comes a point when changing single cylinders to using packs makes economic sense; the same is true for the move to liquid cans and then to bulk.
- How would a switch of supply mode to bulk help create efficiencies and increase safety?

If this has you thinking you're ready for an upgrade, work with your supplier to review the layout of your site. You'll need to be sure you have both the space required for the installation of a bulk gas system and can accommodate tractor trailers for gas deliveries.

Discuss future volume projections, and gas security needs and leverage the expertise of your supplier to help you determine if a mode change is appropriate. When planning for an upgrade to bulk gas supply, be sure to size the system to allow for a delivery every two to three weeks. In cases of high volumes that may not be possible so opt for a storage system that can receive a full load of product. Together develop a detailed project plan for the installation, including design specs, equipment and piping to eliminate downtime and boost efficiency of the new bulk gas supply system.

