

March 31, 2011

Mr. Mike Kadubek
The Welding Center
7400 South Central Avenue
Bedford Park, IL 60638

Notification of *Force Majeure* for Linde North America LLC

Dear Mike :

On March 21, 2011, Linde's supplier of calcium carbide, the raw material from which acetylene is generated, experienced a catastrophic explosion at its carbide furnacing operation in Louisville, KY. As a result, the supplier has ceased production at its facility and declared force majeure, effective March 22.

Consequently, it is necessary for Linde to declare an event of force majeure under our agreements with affected customers, effective April 4, 2011. Until the force majeure is resolved, we will allocate acetylene in a manner that is fair and reasonable and in accordance with our contractual force majeure obligations. Currently, that allocation is equal to 100% of your normal acetylene supply.

In addition, Linde will implement a \$3.18/ccf surcharge to recover the substantial additional costs necessary to continue to deliver acetylene to you during the force majeure. If, instead of paying the surcharge, you prefer to source your acetylene requirements from an alternative supplier while the surcharge is in effect, please fill out the attached form and return it as instructed.

While we are unable to predict the exact duration of this force majeure, we will provide you with status updates, and advise you of any changes to the allocation level or surcharge as promptly as possible. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please contact Margie Harrison.