

### A NEW YEAR'S EVE STORY

A former colleague of mine has described a New Year Ball that did not go exactly as planned. He wrote:

We wished to make the New Year Ball particularly spectacular and had arranged for a couple of hundred brightly colored balloons to be released among the revelers from a net suspended from the ballroom ceiling. During the afternoon before the event we decided that manual inflation of the balloons was far too exhausting and I ordered a cylinder of compressed carbon dioxide to be sent up from the Analytical Lab. The balloons, all two hundred of them, were inflated in no time at all and the clusters were hoisted to the ceiling in the releasable net. Imagine our chagrin and extreme embarrassment when arriving for the opening of the Ball a few hours later to find that every balloon had shrunk to the size of a small orange and on eventual release fell to the floor with sickening thuds. I had learned my lesson - India rubber is permeable to carbon dioxide!

When plastic water pipes are run through oil-soaked ground the water may become contaminated with oil.

In some combustible gas detectors the sample is drawn through a plastic tube to the measuring element. The plastics used absorb some flammable vapors. It is better to use detectors in which the element is at the end of a lead and can be located at the point of test, such as the inside of a vessel.

Plastic containers used to collect samples of gas for analysis may absorb some constituents of the gas and make the results of the analysis incorrect.

*From Still Going Wrong – Case Histories of Process Plant Disasters and How they Could have Been Avoided* (Gulf Professional Publishing).