

Fire Safety Toolbox Talk

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Fire safety is incredibly important for every workplace no matter the industry, since they can happen anywhere at any time. Each facility should adhere to established fire codes, perform a thorough assessment of present fire hazards, have an extensive understanding of fire suppression equipment, and have a comprehensive emergency plan in place. Through training and preparation, you can help reduce the risk of a fire breaking out in your facility, and ensure that workers know what to do if one does occur.

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

FIRE HAZARDS COMMON TO MANY OPERATIONS

Recognizing the types of risks you might face begins with identifying and understanding those hazards. **Consider these common sources of workplace fire hazards or ignition sources when assessing fire risk:**

- Process machinery that can overheat or generate excessive mechanical friction or static electricity.
- Systems using combustible hydraulic fluids.
- Hot work activity (e.g., welding, brazing, cutting and grinding).
- Industrial furnaces or ovens.
- Controls and safety interlocks on fuel fired boilers and hot water heaters, which can present a risk if inadequate or poorly maintained.
- Spray painting and use of flammable or combustible liquids.
- Accumulation of combustible dusts from manufacturing processes.
- Operations using flammable gases.
- Stacked storage of combustible materials that may impact the

effectiveness of sprinklers and impede responding fire departments.

- Electrical equipment, wiring, load centers, junction boxes, circuit breakers, transformers and motors, all of which can present a hazard if improperly installed or maintained.
- Inadequate tobacco smoking controls.

UNIQUE FIRE RISKS

There may be fire hazards associated with exposures that are unique to your particular type of operation. **For example, in the metals industry, the following hazards may exist:**

- Combustible metal dusts.
- Pyrophoric materials (substances that ignite instantly upon exposure to oxygen).
- Water-reactive metals.
- Combustible and flammable liquids.
- Dip tanks using hazardous materials.
- Heat-treating operations.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

GENERAL PRECAUTIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

Eliminate workplace fire hazards:

- Damaged electrical outlets, cords, cables, etc.
- Overloaded outlets and circuits
- Combustible objects in unsecured locations (included excessive trash and recycling)—keep these far from electrical equipment!
- Fire exit obstacles

Keep workspace and equipment clean, dry, and well-ventilated, and especially clean of oil and dust.

PREPARE FOR EMERGENCIES

- Follow workspace protocol and guidelines to ensure safety and health; know and understand rules and procedures

concerning fire emergencies.

- Ensure that smoke alarms and sprinkler systems are installed, working properly, and are not blocked.
- Conduct regular fire drills.

12 TIPS TO ENSURE A FIRE-SAFE WORKPLACE:

Step 1. Get Organized— Practice good workplace housekeeping. Clutter contributes to fires by providing fuel and by preventing access to exits and emergency equipment.

Step 2. Designated Smoking Areas – Smoke only in designated areas, and extinguish smoking materials safely. Never smoke in storerooms or chemical storage areas.

Step 3. Fire Extinguishers – Maintaining the appropriate type and number of fire extinguishers and learn how to properly use a fire extinguisher.

Step 4. Electrical Hazards – Report all electrical hazards. Many fires start in faulty wiring and malfunctioning electrical equipment.

Step 5. Access to Control Panels – Electrical control panels need to have free access maintained so that the electric could be shut off easily.

Step 6. Maintenance – Maintain machinery to prevent overheating and friction sparks.

Step 7. Sprinkler Systems & Smoke Detectors – Never block sprinklers, firefighting equipment or emergency exits. Observe clearances when stacking materials. Testing of sprinkler systems and smoke detectors at least annually.

Step 8. Chemical Safety – Use and store chemicals safely. Read the label and the Material Safety Data Sheet to determine flammability and other fire hazards. Provide adequate ventilation when using and storing these substances.

Step 9. Waste Control & Storage – Control the accumulations of

flammable and combustible waste materials and residues so that they do not contribute to a fire emergency.

Step 10. Prevent Ignition – Use all precautions to prevent ignition in potentially explosive atmospheres such as those containing flammable liquid vapors or fine particles. Use non-sparking tools, and control static electricity as required.

Step 11. Exits – Emergency exit diagrams should be posted and emergency exits should be well lit with neon-regulation signs.

Step 12. Contact Info – Employees should have a list of emergency contact phone numbers in case of emergency. Remember that people will often panic in an intense situation; therefore basics such as the company address, phone number and floor plan should be posted.

Prevention is always better than cure and it's best to avoid catastrophe in the first place or at least minimize the damage. The simple truth is that fire emergencies and disasters can strike anyone, anytime, anywhere. So if a fire does break out in your workplace **A-C-T, DON'T PANIC**

A – ASSESS THE SITUATION

C – CHOOSE YOUR RESPONSE

T – TAKE ACTION

FINAL WORD

Practice, Practice, Practice,

Can you feel your way out of the office and building with your eyes closed, or in the dark? Do you know multiple escape routes? Do you know the low windows from which you could jump? Do you instinctively use the back of your hand to feel a door's heat, and do you remain crouched down as close to the floor as possible?