

Hot work permit policy—construction sites



“Hot work” is defined as any task on a construction site that generates fire, sparks or heat to weld, solder, braise or cut (including abrasive wheel cutting). The two main elements of a good hot work permit policy are:

- 1. Notification:** Any trade that will use heat to accomplish a task should notify the general contractor (GC) the day before. They will be sure there is an effective “fire watch,” including portable fire extinguishers of an appropriate type and size, to put out any accidental fires as they occur. They will inspect the site where the work is to be performed and eliminate or protect all combustible surfaces and material. In the event of high wind or other atmospheric conditions that might cause fire to spread more quickly, exposed work should be temporarily suspended.
- 2. Cessation:** All hot work should be terminated at least 30 minutes prior to the end of the shift/work day. Most smoldering fires will flare up before all personnel leave the site. The GC should have someone do a final inspection of the day’s hot work areas to be sure there are no smoldering embers, slag, etc. High winds that might fan embers and spread them rapidly should force a stoppage of all hot work as well.

There is no such thing as a totally non-combustible site. All structural elements might be steel or masonry, but there is still packing material, insulation and other debris that can catch fire. When we look back at the cause/origin of construction site-related property claims, we see a significant percentage of fires that flare up after all personnel have left for the day. This tells us they were started at the end of the day, smoldered undetected for a short time and grew into a fire, while nobody was there to extinguish them as they developed. A 30-minute buffer at the end of the day should enable the workers to identify and extinguish the majority of this type of fire before it can do damage.

Lastly, we strongly encourage the active limitation of combustible debris by placing material in roll-off dumpsters located away from the building.

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