

Fire Prevention Tips for the Workplace

October is National Fire Safety Month. But fire safety is an important workplace topic throughout the year. Preventing fires is everyone's job. Keep your work area orderly and free of clutter. Maintain equipment in good repair. Promptly report any fire hazards so they can be eliminated. We all need to be alert to anything that could cause a fire, and take responsibility to report any problem areas so they can be corrected.

To Prevent a Workplace Fire

- ◆ Practice good workplace housekeeping. Do not allow clutter to accumulate around exits and stairways. Fire exits should always remain free and accessible. Empty trash bins regularly.
- ◆ Smoke only in designated areas, and extinguish smoking materials safely. Never smoke in storerooms or chemical storage areas. Do not empty ashtrays until smoking materials are cold.
- ◆ Place oily rags in a covered metal container. This waste must be properly disposed of on a regular basis.
- ◆ Maintain machinery to prevent overheating and friction sparks. Follow manufacturer's instructions in using and maintaining equipment.
- ◆ Never refuel equipment powered by gasoline, kerosene, or diesel fuel when the equipment is hot, or in the presence of an open flame such as a furnace or water heater.
- ◆ Report electrical hazards. Many fires start in faulty wiring and malfunctioning electrical equipment. Never overload circuits, and never force circuit breakers to remain in the "on" position. Never attempt electrical repairs unless you are qualified and authorized.
- ◆ Maintain free access to all electrical control panels. Material or equipment stored in front of the panels would slow down the shutting down of power in an emergency situation.
- ◆ It is important to understand the fire hazards of the materials with which you work. 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.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Many workplace fires are set by arsonists; do your part to prevent these incidents. Lock up as instructed; report suspicious persons; and don't leave combustible rubbish where it can be set afire outside the building.
- ◆ Never block sprinklers, firefighting equipment or emergency exits. Observe clearances when stacking materials.
- ◆ Post emergency telephone numbers as well as the company address by the telephone in your station for quick access if a fire were to start in your work area.
- ◆ Fireproof your work area. Get rid of stockpiles of combustible materials. Remember, all those old files that you haven't gotten around to getting rid of are combustible.
- ◆ Learn how to properly use a fire extinguisher.



The best way to fight a fire is to prevent it from happening in the first place. Do your part to stop fires before they start.

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