



TOOLBOX TALK: Fire Prevention/Protection

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Compared to other nations, the United States has one of the worst records for fire-related deaths, injuries, and financial losses. Most fires are preventable, and the responsibility for preventing them belongs to each of us. The job is not complicated - if you eliminate the fire source. A fire requires fuel, oxygen, and an ignition source to occur. If you remove one or more of these ingredients, there can be no fire.

Proper training and fire protection equipment is essential to protect workers from serious injury or loss of life in the event of a fire in the workplace. The following tips could save your property, job, and life:

- Clean up scraps so that they cannot become fuel for a fire from a stray spark.
- Store flammable and combustible liquids properly; keep them away from heat sources and tightly sealed in their original containers.
- Never store cardboard, paper, clothing, or other combustible materials near furnaces, water heaters, or any other source of ignition.

Electrical fires are common. When fuses or breakers trip, consider this a serious warning that something is wrong, such as a short or an overloaded circuit. Remember, fuses are sized to the wire they are protecting so that they fail before the wire or appliance fails. Be alert for damaged, defective, or overloaded wiring. Never lay extension cords where they may be damaged by other equipment or vehicles.

Most workplaces are provided with temporary or permanent fire protection equipment, including fire extinguishers, water barrels and buckets, fire hoses, sprinkler systems, and fire alarm devices. Each item should be placed at a designated location as part of an overall fire protection system.

Some basic safety rules for the use of fire protection equipment are:

1. Do not use fire protection equipment for any purpose other than firefighting.
2. Report missing or defective equipment to your supervisor.
3. Do not try to fight a major fire unless necessary to protect yourself or others from injury or loss of life.
4. When equipment has been used, report it to your supervisor so that it can be recharged or restored to a state of readiness.
5. Certain types of fire extinguishers are intended for use on certain types of fires. The three most common types of fire extinguishers are rated "A," "B," or "C."
 - a. Class A fire extinguishers cover fires caused by ordinary combustibles - paper, wood, etc.
 - b. Class B fire extinguishers cover fires caused by flammable liquids - grease, oil. Gasoline, etc.
 - c. Class C fire extinguishers cover fires caused by live electrical items - switches, wiring, appliances, tools, etc.
6. Develop a fire evacuation plan and perform practice drills. Life safety is of the utmost importance. Remember, the average dry chemical fire extinguisher discharges its entire contents in about ten seconds.