

## Toolbox Safety Topic

### Fire Prevention

Fire can be a useful tool in a controlled situation – like in a fireplace or grilling out. But nothing can be as terrifying as fire when it's out of control. The best way to control fires in the workplace is to prevent them from happening in the first place. The dangers of fire are not simply serious injury from being burned or death. Fire can also:

- suffocate you by consuming the oxygen from the air,
- release toxic vapors by reacting with chemicals,
- cause explosions by combining with explosive materials.

**What basic ingredients does fire need in order to burn?** (Fuel – this means anything that can burn, oxygen, heat – or ignition source from flame, electricity, friction, chemical reaction.) The secret to preventing fires is to make sure that these three ingredients don't get together.

The leading cause of workplace fires is electrical equipment. Examples of electrical equipment that can cause fires include:

- Damaged electrical cords and wiring
- Defective electric tools that spark
- Overloaded circuits
- Hot lights or machinery that comes in contact with flammable material

Some other common sources of fire in the workplace include:

- Smoking
- Space heaters
- Welding and cutting operations
- Spontaneous combustion
- Chemical reactions

Here are some tips for preventing fires in the workplace.

#### **Electrical:**

1. Don't use damaged or defective electrical cords or tools.
2. Don't overload circuits or outlets, such as plugging too many cords into one outlet.
3. Don't let flammable materials get close to electrical equipment or machinery.
4. Make sure grounding connections work (3<sup>rd</sup> prong not removed, etc.)

#### **Chemicals:**

1. Find out if a liquid chemical is flammable by checking the label or MSDS.
2. Use flammable liquids only in a well-ventilated area.
3. Don't use flammable liquids near sources of flame or heat.
4. Store flammable liquids in approved, airtight metal containers.
5. Promptly clean up any spills and dispose of properly. Call EHSS, we can help!

#### **Housekeeping:**

1. Clean up flammable scraps, sawdust, etc. and dispose of it properly.
2. Keep dust and debris off machinery and electrical equipment.
3. Store all flammable materials properly.
4. Enforce no smoking rules, where applicable.
5. Follow hot work policies and procedures.

In spite of all that can be done to prevent fires, they sometimes happen. If a fire breaks out, you need to know the proper response. If you have received portable fire extinguisher training, you should respond appropriately. Always call 9-1-1, even if the fire was put out. Otherwise:

1. Know the sound of a fire alarm and act accordingly. (Don't assume it's a false alarm.)
2. Turn off energized equipment.
3. Close any windows not used for escape to help reduce the flow of oxygen.
4. Evacuate the area, quickly but calmly, notifying others as you go.

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Fire Prevention

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Conducted By: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

### Attendees

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