

Managing hot work

'Hot work' refers to an activity or process that generates flame, heat or sparks, and introduces a foreseeable risk of fire or explosion through a source of ignition created by tools or equipment.

Failure to adequately control hot work has been the cause of many construction site fires, many of them on refurbishment and maintenance jobs due to cutting, burning and welding operations and intense heat from halogen lights.



Essential points to consider

- Identify the responsible person, with regard to fire safety. A competent person must determine if any tasks represent an enhanced risk of fire breaking out due to the use of a source of heat.
- Establish if there is a risk of burns from persons encountering fire, a risk of smoke or toxic fume inhalation, and a risk of injuries to others beyond the site boundary who may not be prepared if the fire spreads.
- Liaise and co-operate with third parties and existing building occupiers to establish if hot work could interfere with existing fire detection systems.
- Put additional controls in place for high-risk work. Determine tasks that need to be carried out under a hot-work permit, establish a hot-work permit system, and ensure that it is complied with.
- Provide training to workers involved in hot work on the permit system, as well as training on any portable firefighting equipment that they may be expected to use (such as fire extinguishers or fire blankets).
- Physically monitor any hot work to make sure that the work is being carried out in accordance with the conditions stipulated in the hot-work permit, as well as checking that the correct fire extinguishers are available at the location of the work, and that anyone who is not involved with the work is being kept out of the area (using physical barriers, if required).
- Stop all hot work at least one hour before the end of the working day, or two hours before the end of the working day in areas of high-risk work (such as on or around timber frames).
- Make sure that a fire watch and fire checks are in place for areas where hot work has been carried out, and that these are checked prior to leaving site.
- Prevent and minimise the risk of firefighting water run-off entering watercourses, and the risk of ground contamination from products of combustion.
- Ensure that site inductions make individuals aware of the site's fire safety procedures, any additional controls for high-risk work, and the requirement for hot-work permits.
- Make sure that everyone involved in hot work is competent to do what is asked of them in regard to fire safety, and communicate any updates or changes to workers.
- The Fire Protection Association introduced a hot-work passport scheme to enhance the level of competence of those involved in work that has the potential to produce sources of ignition. The passport is valid for five years, and is suitable for employees involved in carrying out hot work or with responsibility for supervising or managing hot work.

Further information

- You can find out more at www.thefpa.co.uk/training/fire-safety-management-training-courses/hot-work-passport.

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