



Fires in the Workplace

Falling Object Protection

Fire! The word is a scary one because fires are very frightening. In our workplace, management has done its best to eliminate fire hazards and to protect life and property if a fire should break out. But the company also relies on each one of you each day to help prevent a company fire disaster. Here are some ways in which you can do your part.

The Worst Case

Let's begin at the end, with the most important warning of all: if there is a fire, pull the fire alarm nearest you and exit the building. Do not take an elevator if you are on an upper floor, but leave by using a stairway. Elevators will usually cease to operate during a fire, and many people who have tried to flee by elevator have died from heat, smoke, and deadly gases.

Right now, today, locate at least two exits close to your work area. Learn them so well that you can reach them in the dark. In fact, the smoke from a fire may be so thick that no one will be able to see the route to the exit. In the event of a serious fire, remember, you will have to crawl on your hands and knees to an exit in order to find breathable air and to escape some of the heat.

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Prevention is the 'Cure'

But if you and your co-workers are careful and understand how fires start, it should never come to that. You can stop a fire by not causing one. Preventing fires begins with following safe storage practices, as they are set out in company safety rules. For instance, flammable liquids must be put back in their assigned place, never in a more convenient spot to be returned for safekeeping later on. Later on may never come. Store them where they belong now.

The same rule holds true for oil- or solvent-soaked rags. Don't just drop them where you are when you stop working; place those rags in the proper metal container with a self-closing lid.

And whatever hazards are around-and there are bound to be some in a normal, active workplace-remember to follow the smoking rules exactly as set forth by the company. If you think "Oh, it doesn't matter as long as no one's around to see me," you are mistaken-and it may be your last mistake.



Fires are also caused by carelessness with electrical appliances. If you plug something in and it smells as though it may be starting to burn, disconnect the unit at once and report a malfunction. Every time you prepare to plug in a tool or machine, check the cord. If a cord is cracked or frayed, don't use the tool or machine—turn it in or report it for repair instead.

More fires start during winter than at any other time of year. This is because heaters are often used in an unsafe manner. Make sure that any heater used in your workplace is away from flammable materials and cannot tip over. Keep the heater out of walkways. Don't leave the workplace after your shift and forget the heater. Don't just turn it off, either, but pull the plug so that it won't go on automatically when no one is there. Let the next shift plug the heater in themselves so that they realize it is on and has to be watched. Don't forget to keep aisles and exits free of obstructions. If a fire does occur, you must be able to get out quickly without falling over boxes and machinery. Also, keep doors to enclosed stairways closed—even though it may seem to be a nuisance. An open door can cause extra danger during a fire, letting smoke into the stairwell and making it difficult to escape.

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