



Protect Your Auto Repair Shop from Fires Caused by "Hot Work"

"Hot work" involves torch cutting, welding and grinding metal. These practices produce sparks, molten slag and highly conductive heat that provide an abundance of ignition sources during the task and - often - well after the work is done. Many repair shops have been severely damaged or destroyed by fires caused by hot work activity.

Effectively manage the fire threat by evaluating your work practices, establishing written safety procedures, training your staff and monitoring conditions before, during and after the hot work activity. Here are some things to consider when developing your hot work management plan:

- 1) **Don't do it!** Avoiding hot work and the associated hazards is the best protection method. Consider using alternate repair methods whenever possible.
- 2) **Perform the work outside.** The typical repair shop contains a wide variety of ignitable materials. Working on the vehicle in an open outside area away from buildings reduces the fire potential. An added benefit - if something ignites it will be easier to contain the fire to the vehicle without threatening your repair shop.
- 3) **Designate the hot work area.** Completing all "hot work" in an area designed to control the hazards is always a good idea. Restrict storage in the area and eliminate all combustible and flammable materials. Any structural building component that could ignite should be properly enclosed with fire resistive materials. Keep a minimum clear space of 35 feet on the open sides of the area. Use approved welding curtains or blankets as needed to provide another level of protection.
- 4) **Prepare before you begin.** Check the vehicle and the work area. Isolate vehicle insulation and upholstery that may be exposed to heat. Address leaking fluids and residual spills. Remember - flammable vapors travel at floor level and are easily ignited by slag and sparks! Before you begin - make a final safety check to assure there is no storage in the area and that protective measures are in place.
- 5) **Protect.** Equip your shop with an adequate supply of fire extinguishers and provide additional extinguishers for use in the hot work area. Train your staff on the proper usage of fire extinguishers, emergency reporting and evacuation procedures.
- 6) **Watch and monitor.** Check the area at 15 minute intervals during the hot work and monitor for at least one hour after completing the job. Consider storing the vehicle outside and away from the building as an additional safety measure. At closing time, make a thorough inspection of the vehicle and the shop to ensure conditions are safe before you lock up for the night.
- 7) **Install a central-station-reporting fire-detection system throughout your facility to provide another layer of protection.** If a fire starts, early detection and alarm transmission are critical to helping save your shop.

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