



## 7 Ways to Protect Your Auto Repair Shop from Fires in Stored Vehicles

Fire is a constant threat and a frequent cause of loss to auto repair shops. Flammable liquids, compressed flammable gases, electrical problems, and malfunctioning heating units are common culprits for causing fires. Recent loss experience points to another cause as well: *a vehicle stored inside your building*. Stored vehicles create additional fire potential and add to the fuel load in your shop once a fire starts. These fires can spread easily, threatening other vehicles, shop content, and even the building itself. They can also keep you out of business for a long time!

### What to do

1. **Avoid storing vehicles overnight.** If customers' vehicles must be stored overnight, keep them outside at least 25 feet from the building to avoid exposure to fire. Also, consider arranging your after-hours service drop-off area away from the building.
2. **Ask the customer to empty the vehicle of all personal property if a vehicle must be stored inside overnight.** This reduces potential ignition sources inside the vehicle such as laptops, cell phones, chargers, smoking devices, flammable and combustible liquids, household and automotive chemicals, and oily rags that may spontaneously ignite.
3. **Examine the vehicle before bringing it inside to assure there are no obvious hazards.** Loose equipment, such as an exhaust system component, could be an ignition source if it comes into contact with combustibles in your shop. Take appropriate action to avoid problems.
4. **Once inside the shop, disconnect the vehicle's battery and make sure the cables are stowed so they cannot accidentally reconnect and reenergize the vehicle.** If the battery is "dead," do not charge the vehicle when the shop is unattended.
5. **Maintain adequate housekeeping near the stored vehicle.** Flammables and combustibles contribute to a fire spreading. Clean up spilled oil and other combustible fluids, keep flammable and compressed gases away from the area, and remove cardboard waste to eliminate fuel load.
6. **Bring the customer's vehicle inside at least one hour before closing.** At closing time, make a quick 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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