CrewSigned

Hot Work Toolbox Talk

5-minute read-aloud · Last reviewed November 24, 2026

Hot work is any job that makes flame, sparks or enough heat to start a fire. That means welding, torch cutting, brazing, soldering, grinding and thawing pipe with a torch. Sparks from these jobs can fly more than thirty feet, drop through cracks in a floor, and smolder inside a wall for an hour before anyone sees smoke. A lot of serious building fires start this way.

The first question is whether we need hot work at all. If we can cut with a saw, use a mechanical fitting, or move the part to a shop, that is safer. If we do need it, we plan it.

Before you start, get the hot work permit filled out and signed. Then look at everything within 35 feet of where you will work. Move anything that can burn: lumber, cardboard, trash, gas cans and chemicals. If something cannot be moved, cover it with a fire blanket or metal shields. Sweep up sawdust and debris. Cover floor cracks and openings so sparks cannot fall through. Check the other side of walls, floors and ceilings, because heat travels through metal and pipe.

Never do hot work near flammable vapors, or on a tank, drum or pipe that held fuel or chemicals until it has been cleaned and tested. Even an empty drum can explode.

Have a charged fire extinguisher right at the work area, not across the site. The person doing the work should know how to use it.

A fire watch is needed whenever there is combustible material closer than 35 feet that we could not move, or when sparks could reach places you cannot see. The fire watch's only job is to watch for fire. They do not help with the work. They stay at least half an hour after the hot work is finished, because that is when hidden fires show up. On some jobs we check again later.

If something does catch, stop work, warn people, and use the extinguisher only if the fire is small. Otherwise get out and call 911.

Hot work takes a few extra minutes to set up. A fire can take the whole building.

Discussion questions

1. What hot work are we doing this week, and what is within 35 feet of it that could burn?
2. Who is the fire watch for each job, and how long do they stay after the work stops?
3. What is on the other side of the wall, floor or ceiling where we are cutting?

OSHA standard

29 CFR 1926.352, Fire prevention during welding and cutting
https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1926/1926.352

SOURCES

29 CFR 1910.252, Welding, cutting and brazing general requirements: https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.252
OSHA Welding, Cutting, and Brazing, Hazards and Solutions: https://www.osha.gov/welding-cutting-brazing/hazards-solutions
OSHA Fire Safety: https://www.osha.gov/fire-safety

This talk does not replace training that an OSHA standard requires. Scripts are based on OSHA and NIOSH publications and rewritten in plain language.

Safety Meeting Sign-In Sheet

TOPIC
Hot Work Toolbox Talk

COMPANY

JOB / SITE

DATE

TIME

PRESENTER

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