

# Hot Work Permits

## WHY THIS MATTERS

Hot work — welding, cutting, grinding, brazing — is one of the leading causes of workplace fires. Between 2014–2018, U.S. fire departments responded to 4,630 structure fires per year caused by hot work (NFPA), resulting in an average of 15 deaths, 198 injuries and \$355 million in property damage annually. Facilities using hot work permits have 30% fewer fires. A written permit is the first line of defense.

**4,630**

Structure fires per year from hot work (NFPA)

**35 ft**

Min. clearance from combustibles (OSHA 1910.252)

**60 min**

Fire watch after hot work ends (NFPA 51B)

## 5 Rules for Hot Work Permits

Every hot work operation outside a designated shop must follow these rules:

- 1 GET A WRITTEN PERMIT FIRST**  
OSHA 1910.252 requires area inspection and authorization — preferably a written permit.
- 2 CLEAR 35 FEET OF COMBUSTIBLES**  
Remove or cover all flammable materials within 35 ft. Sweep floors of shavings and dust.
- 3 ASSIGN A FIRE WATCH**  
A trained person with a fire extinguisher must monitor during and after hot work.
- 4 MAINTAIN FIRE WATCH 60 MINUTES**  
NFPA 51B requires fire watch for at least 60 min after work ends — not 30.
- 5 INSPECT AND SIGN OFF**  
The permit authorizer must verify all controls before, during and after the job.

## Before You Start — Quick Checklist

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is a written hot work permit signed and posted? | <input type="checkbox"/> Are combustibles removed or covered within 35 ft? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is a charged fire extinguisher within reach?    | <input type="checkbox"/> Is a trained fire watch person assigned?          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are wall/floor/ceiling openings sealed?         | <input type="checkbox"/> Is the sprinkler system in service?               |

## Key Standards & Permit Requirements

**OSHA 1910.252:** General industry — area inspection, authorization, 35-ft combustible clearance, fire watch.

**OSHA 1926.352:** Construction sites — same clearance rules plus special rules for impaired sprinklers.

**NFPA 51B:** Fire Prevention During Welding, Cutting and Other Hot Work — mandatory written permit system.

**Fire Watch:** Trained person with extinguisher, monitors during work + 60 min after (NFPA 51B 2019).

**Confined Spaces:** Hot work in confined spaces requires BOTH a hot work permit AND a confined space permit.

**Used Containers:** Never perform hot work on drums, barrels or tanks until cleaned of all flammable residues.

### Common Mistakes That Start Fires

- ✗ Skipping the permit — "it's just a quick tack weld" causes more fires than any other excuse
- ✗ Leaving combustibles within 35 feet — sparks travel farther than you think
- ✗ Ending fire watch too early — smoldering fires can ignite hours after the torch is off
- ✗ Hot work on containers without purging — residual vapors can explode

### Safety Tips to Remember

- ✓ No permit = no hot work — always get written authorization before striking an arc
- ✓ The 35-foot rule applies to walls, floors and ceilings — sparks travel through gaps
- ✓ Fire watch stays 60 minutes after the last spark — not 30 (NFPA 51B, 2019)
- ✓ Keep the permit posted at the job site — visible proof that controls are in place

## Discussion Questions for Your Team

1. Where are our hot work permit forms — and who is authorized to sign them?
2. When was the last time we had a fire watch stay the full 60 minutes after hot work?
3. Have we inspected all areas within 35 feet of today's hot work location?
4. What is our procedure if the sprinkler system is impaired during hot work?
5. Has anyone performed hot work on a used container? What was the procedure?

### TOOLBOX TALK SIGN-OFF

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Project: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Attendance sheet attached: [ ] Yes