

news & notes

YOU CAN PREVENT FIRES

October 4 through 10 is Fire Prevention Week. Do your part to prevent fires.

Housekeeping

- Put waste in proper containers.
- Keep combustible materials like cardboard, paper, and wood away from heat and hot equipment.
- Keep areas free of dust and lint.

Flammable liquids

- Follow storage precautions on labels and MSDSs.
- Clean up spills immediately.
- Report leaks right away.
- Use nonflammable substitutes for cleaning and other tasks.
- Use approved airtight metal containers that are kept closed when not in use.
- Ground containers during transfers.
- Use only in well-ventilated areas, away from heat and other ignition sources.
- Treat empty containers as you would full ones, unless purged.

Electricity

- Don't overload outlets, circuits, or motors.
- Replace cords and wires that have worn or broken insulation.
- Get good ground connections.
- Keep machines and motors clean of dust and grease.



Starting a workplace fire by accident: easy.
Starting a campfire on purpose: extremely difficult.



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Be Fire Smart

Take steps to prevent workplace fires

What does it take to start a workplace fire? Surprisingly little. First, you need some oxygen, and there's no shortage of that in the air. Then you need some kind of fuel, and there's a lot of that in the form of paper, cardboard, wood, cloth, flammable and combustible liquids, and other materials that burn easily. Finally, you need an ignition source like a spark, a flame, heat, or electricity. Oh, yes, there's one other thing—carelessness. Somebody has to be careless enough to let all these fire-starters get together.

Here's an example:

A leaking chemical container releases flammable vapors that are heavier than air, and so they sink to floor level and travel across the work area to where a worker is using a metal tool that creates a spark. The spark ignites the vapors, which burn rapidly. If there are enough vapors or if the fire makes it back to the container of flammable liquid, there could be an explosion.

All the elements of a fire existed here—oxygen, fuel, and ignition source—plus the added ingredient, carelessness. The worker should have been using nonsparking tools in an area where flammable liquids were present. And someone should have inspected the container, found the leak, and reported it.

Here's another example:

There's a pile of cardboard and paper trash out on the loading dock. A worker sneaking a smoke fails to completely extinguish the cigarette before tossing the butt into the pile of trash. It takes a while, but eventually the trash bursts into flames. If the fire goes unnoticed for long, it could easily spread.

Again, all the elements for starting a fire were there. Plus, someone's carelessness resulted in a pile of combustible trash lying around, and someone else's carelessness set the trash on fire.

Look around your work area. Is there fuel to start a fire? Are there ignition sources? Are you being careful and making sure that the fuel and the ignition sources don't get together to start a fire?

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SAFETY CHECKS

The last day of **October** is the last day of **daylight saving time**. The University of Oklahoma Police Department suggests using the occasion of setting your clocks forward or back as a cue to:

- **Check and replace the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms.** Also replace smoke alarms older than 10 years. Replace CO alarms older than 5 years.
- **Check your disaster supply kit, e.g., water, food, flashlights, batteries, and blankets.** Use the time change to check its contents, including testing/replacing flashlight and radio batteries.
- **Check storage areas for hazardous materials.** Discard any that are outdated, no longer used, or in poor condition.
- **Go through your medicine cabinet.** Discard outdated medications. Crush them and discard them in a way that children can't find them.

DRUG-FREE WORK WEEK

The week of **October 19 to 25** is **Drug-Free Work Week**. This is a good time to remember how hazardous it is to drive or work under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The purpose of this event is to highlight the dangers of substance abuse and encourage working people with drug or alcohol problems to seek help.



Hazard Alert!

Office safety do's and don'ts

Do:

- Keep aisles and walkways free of tripping hazards.
- Position office furniture and cabinets away from doors and aisles to allow people to move around freely and safely.
- Use a stepstool or ladder to reach high shelves.
- Keep desk and file drawers closed when not in use.
- Place the heaviest items on the lowest shelves of bookcases and in the bottom drawers of file cabinets.
- Keep the area around your desk neat and orderly.
- Maintain good posture to avoid stressing neck, shoulders, back, and wrists.
- Be careful when closing drawers so that you don't pinch fingers.
- Make sure staples are completely closed to avoid cuts.
- Turn on the light before entering a dark room or space.
- Report any safety hazards to your supervisor.

Don't:

- Don't overload electrical circuits.
- Don't use extension cords as a permanent solution.
- Don't block exit routes or emergency doors.
- Don't try to lift items that are too heavy for you—get help or call maintenance.
- Don't repair office equipment; leave it to trained and authorized personnel.

Fire Extinguisher Quiz

How much do you know about extinguisher use?

Quiz #1. Each letter in the column on the left below corresponds to a class of fire an extinguisher is designed to fight. Grab a pencil and draw a line between those letters and the class of fire they represent in the column on the right.

A	Electrical equipment and wiring
B	Combustible metals
C	Multiple use and combination fires
D	Paper, cardboard, wood, trash, rags, or cloth
ABC	Grease, gases, or flammable liquids

Quiz #2. The PASS technique describes the proper method for using a fire extinguisher. What do the letters P-A-S-S stand for?

- (P) _____ the pin.
- (A) _____ at the base of the fire.
- (S) _____ the handle.
- (S) _____ back and forth.

Answers

Quiz #1: **A**—paper, cardboard, wood, trash, rags, or cloth; **B**—grease, gases, or flammable liquids, such as gasoline, oil, solvents, and paint; **C**—electrical equipment and wiring; **D**—combustible metals such as aluminum, sodium, magnesium, or zinc; and **ABC**—Class A, B, or C fires and for combination fires.

Quiz #2: Pull; Aim; Squeeze; Sweep