

## Preventing Welding & Cutting Fires

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Taking some basic fire prevention precautions can prevent welding and cutting fires. Performing this work in specially designated areas, that is free of combustible materials, is the best protection against welding and cutting fires. When this is not possible, such as maintenance type welding or cutting, that is required to be performed in the field, make sure you have an effective "hot work" procedure in place. Before any type of welding or cutting is permitted, outside of designed areas, the individual responsible for authorizing such work must inspect the area. This individual must designate precautions to be followed before granting authorization to proceed, preferably in the form of a written permit.

Portable welding screens or other forms of noncombustible guards should be used to confine the heat, sparks and slag. Test the atmosphere, if necessary to ensure there is not an explosive atmosphere with the appropriate monitoring equipment. Combustible materials should be moved, if possible, otherwise covered for a radius of 35 feet from the work area. Welding blankets or other flame resistant material can be used to cover or shield combustible materials that can't be moved. Pay particular attention to containers with combustible or flammable materials and openings in buildings such as open doorways, elevator shafts, open or broken windows, ducts, drains, openings and cracks or holes in floors and walls. If hot work is performed on or adjacent to metal walls, partitions, ceilings or roofs, combustible materials on the other side should be moved.

If the appropriate precautions cannot be carried out, a fire watch, with the appropriate fire extinguishing equipment, should be assigned the area during the work and continue to inspect the area for at least 30 minutes after the hot work is completed.