

Spontaneous Combustion Prevention on the Jobsite



What is Spontaneous Combustion?

Spontaneous combustion occurs when materials self-ignite due to chemical reactions or heat buildup. On construction sites, these fires can escalate quickly, posing a serious threat to materials, equipment, structures, and most importantly people. By understanding the risks and causes of spontaneous combustion, contractors can ensure the safety of their teams and success of their project.

Why is Spontaneous Combustion Important to Understand?

Spontaneous combustion is important to understand for the personal and financial safety and security of any given construction project. Moreover, it is crucial to understand the causes of spontaneous combustion in order to mitigate the risk and having a planned protocol to enact when it occurs.

Ways to Mitigate the Risk of Spontaneous Combustion

- Remove combustibles from the building at the end of each workday and place in a noncombustible dumpster at least 25 ft. from structure.
- Establish a nightly closing routine in which all unnecessary electrical items are unplugged.
- Provide fire extinguishers rated no less than 2A for each 3,000 square feet of the protected building area.
- Do not throw away rags in the trash. Store oily rags in OSHA – advised metal containers with lids.
- Rags and brushes used in painting or staining projects should be cleaned immediately after use or stored safely in water-filled containers.
- Keep wood chip and sawdust piles small and well-ventilated to allow heat to dissipate.
- Hire professionals to help dispose of flammable hazardous materials.

Additional Considerations on Construction Sites

- Establish a nightly closing routine in which all unnecessary electrical items are unplugged.
- Establish designated smoking areas away from any flammable and/or combustible material.
- Have a licensed electrical install and inspect all temporary wiring to ensure safe and proper working conditions.
- Stop all hot work two hours before the end of the day and thoroughly clean the area.

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