



SHIFT BRIEFING



FIRE WATCH BEST PRACTICES

There are two times a formal and documented Fire Watch must be established; after hot work is completed, and when a fire alarm or fire sprinkler system is disabled. Let's look at each.

Fire Watch is defined as a temporary measure intended to ensure continuous surveillance of a building or portion of the building, by trained individuals to identify and control fire hazards, detect early signs of fire, activate an alarm or otherwise notify occupants, and notify the fire department

HOT WORK (welding, torch cutting, brazing, propane soldering) is one of the leading causes of fires in the workplace. Hot work losses are preventable through the use of appropriate work practices.

Before beginning hot work:

- The clear hot work area of combustible materials. If combustible materials (and of course flammable materials) cannot be removed, they must be safeguarded by covering the material with a flame-resistant tarp, or by wetting the material. Complete a Hot Work Permit if the employer requires one.

Do not neglect to account for sparks and hot embers dropping to lower levels if working near stairways, roofs, and other elevated areas.

- Bring a fire extinguisher with a minimum rating of 2A to the hot work area.

Examples of a 2A extinguisher are a pressurized water extinguisher or at least a 9-pound ABC extinguisher.

Maintain a Fire Watch after the conclusion of the hot work.

- The duties and responsibilities of the Fire Watch include:
 - Maintain visual contact with the hot work site, being alert for signs of fire. The person assigned fire watch duties cannot be assigned any duties that demand their attention more than momentarily away from the area.
 - The fire watch shall be maintained for at least 30 minutes after the conclusion of the hot work.
This is not burdensome. Most hot work takes 30 minutes to wrap up hoses, clean and grind the weld, stow fuels, and more.
 - Be trained (documented) in the use of the fire extinguisher.

When a fire alarm or suppression system is found to be inoperable, either wholly or in part, the NJ Fire Code requires the owner of the building shall notify the local fire bureau. The Fire Official may order a Fire Watch to be established.

- The duties and responsibilities of the Fire Watch include:
 - Make rounds of the area(s) as directed by the local Fire Official for the duration of the outage.
 - Have means to make an immediate notification for a fire department response, if needed.
 - Work with the Fire Official and building owner to develop a plan to notify occupants and begin the evacuation if conditions warrant.
- There should be a means to share information between subsequent persons conducting multiple watches for an extended outage.