



# AMERICAN SUBCONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION HOUSTON CHAPTER

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## ACCESSING SAFETY KNOWLEDGE (ASK) SHEET: FIRE PROTECTION AND PREVENTION

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Fire prevention is everyone's business, costing lives and damaging property on an average 4800 construction sites per year. It is essential to be proactive in the prevention of fire related incidents. The simplest and most effective way to prevent potential fire related incidents is to practice good housekeeping. Oily rags, paper, plastic, sawdust, solvents, paints... should be disposed of properly and not allowed to accumulate in work areas.



One of the leading causes of fires from construction activities is directly attributed to Welding and Cutting operations. If an object to be welded or cut cannot be moved to a designated safe location an inspection of all affected areas must be performed to remove any ignitable material prior to beginning operations. Again, good housekeeping practices are effective in preventing fires. If ignitable material or equipment cannot be moved from the affected area protective blankets must be used. A fire watch is strongly recommended if not all ignitable material or equipment can be removed from affected areas or when welding or cutting in existing structures under construction. Welding and Cutting permits should be used in order to effectively communicate to workers detailed precautions prior to beginning operations.

Another leading cause of fires on construction sites have nothing to do with construction activities but are rather classified as "Suspicious" fires. These fires generally ignite rubbish, grass, trees, brush and ignitable building materials. If you observe any suspicious activity it must be reported immediately. Even the careless disregard of a lit cigarette can cause great damage to property or even death.



All construction projects must develop a fire protection/prevention program to be followed throughout all phases of the construction. Adequate and functioning firefighting equipment must also be provided so as a fire hazard occurs, there will be no delay in accessing necessary equipment. A fire extinguisher shall be provided for each 3,000 square feet of the protected building area. At any point on the project one should not be required to travel more than 100 feet to reach a fire extinguisher. On multiple level projects a fire extinguisher must be located adjacent to any stairway.

As with all fires, construction site fires are preventable. Always watch out for smoke because where there is smoke there's usually a fire. Always know where the fire extinguishers are in your work area. If you are unable to extinguish a fire or it is rapidly spreading, get to a safe area immediately. Attempting to save property is not worth a loss of a life.