

Did You Know?

Fire Prevention and Protection Tips



A fire on a LAUSD project had highlighted the need for reminders of a few standard procedures necessary to protect our work product, whether it is a small renovation or a new school. **The LAUSD Safety Standards are referenced in section 00650 of contracts and address most of the following items.**

As projects are closed in with roof, walls and windows even a small smoky fire will have a major financial and scheduling impact on everyone from the contractor to the school and students. Please review these points with all contractors.

Smoking

This is not allowed in buildings or on campuses, nor is any tobacco product allowed on campus. Do not smoke in flammable storage areas and dispose of all materials properly.

Electrical sources

Worn frayed cords and exposed wiring can serve as an ignition source of fires. Cover and close panels, and do not use cardboard or duct tape as a cover. Keep wire guards in place on quartz lights which generate enough heat to ignite a fire.

Gasoline

Only metal explosion proof cans with intact diffuser screens and self-closing lids are allowed. NO plastic cans on the market meet these criteria. Gasoline must be stored in approved flammable storage cabinets. Storage quantities are limited by LAUSD and local fire codes. A separate notice will address this issue.

Flammables

No storage of flammable material is allowed inside school buildings by contractors. If materials must be used, they must be approved prior to use and all requirements of the MSDS must be followed. Be aware of the sparking potential of many power tools such as buffers, grinders, and fans and the risk of fire when fumes are not ventilated properly.

Fire Extinguishers

Fire extinguishers are required in work areas. They are best located near exits and on the same level as the hazard. They can have limited effect on fire exposures behind walls.

Hot Work Permits/ Fire Watches

Some areas, schools, companies or activities may require a formal permit process or only a listing of companies and areas where hot work is being performed. Check project rules.

Storage

Approved site storage is required. The conex, structure or trailer should be identified by contractor's name and contact information on the exterior. Flammable and combustible storage requirements and quantities are addressed on page 46 of the LAUSD Safety Standards referenced in all contracts. Local fire codes by municipalities may require additional conditions or permits.

Signage

Posting of signs and information in work and storage areas are a requirement and protection for contractors. Identify the hazard or condition such as Flammables, No Smoking, etc and do so in a means understandable to the reader.

Other postings include a listing of MSDS's used, especially in cases where others may be exposed to the effects of the material. Have a recent MSDS for the material and review it with the crew before beginning work and with others as needed.

Heat and Weather Conditions

Remember that as hot weather dries us out as human beings, it also can lead to increased fire risks by lowering the moisture content of possible fuel. This includes brush and weeds but also in existing buildings it can dry decade's old timber and when added to cobwebs and sawdust becomes a tinderbox for a spark.

Housekeeping

This is the most important component of fire prevention. Trash is a ready fuel for fires and when added to the risk of flammables and ignition sources such as sparks, welding or smoking, it has the makings of a disaster.

Critical to housekeeping is appropriate disposal. Oily rags or materials used to clean up combustibles are prone to self-igniting if not put into a sealed airtight container and labeled with the hazard. When added to a closed building and high temperatures, the vapors can become flammable or explosive in a short time.