

Every workplace has a range of potential ignition sources that may result in a significant fire loss given the right conditions.

Introduction

These may include:

- ▼ electrical sparks from faulty machinery or loose wiring
- ▼ sparks from welding or grinding activities
- ▼ naked flames from matches or cigarette lighters
- ▼ cigarette butts.

A common approach designed to reduce the risk of fire associated with items three and four is the 'no smoking policy'. Most companies now prohibit smoking anywhere on-site except for designated smoking areas to minimise the chance of a cigarette butt or lighter flame accidentally starting a fire. A second reason for restricting smoking is to protect other people from the hazards of passive smoking.



Strategies to reduce smoking in the workplace can include:

- ▼ Clearly marked smoke free areas with no-smoking signage, in bathrooms, lunch and meeting rooms and company vehicles.
- ▼ Ensure company events are smoke free.
- ▼ Discourage smoking whilst wearing company uniform.
- ▼ Provide support for smokers wishing to quit with subsidised or free quit programs.

In some workplaces a blanket smoking ban is not possible or may even lead to illicit smoking with an increased fire risk. In these instances a designated safe smoking area may be established. When doing so the following should be considered:

- ▼ Designated safe smoking areas should be located away from building entrances, flammable or combustible materials, any enclosed space and thoroughfares as well as air conditioning inlets. This will help to separate the possible ignition source from a fuel source and prevent smoke drift into the workplace.
- ▼ Provide appropriate bins designed for cigarette butts. Examples include "post" style bins or even a metal bucket filled with sand. **Ensure these are emptied regularly in a safe manner.**

Management actions should include:

- ▼ Reviewing the Smoke Free Workplace Policy after first 6 months and every 12 months thereafter.

- ▼ Appoint a committee to: ensure implementation is to a timeline; collect and review feedback from workers and union representatives; present proposed changes with management endorsement.
- ▼ Ensure the consequences of breaching smoking rules are clear and that audits are carried out to enforce no-smoking rules.

Further details on managing the hazards of smoking in the workplace can be found at www.quit.org.au, www.cancer.org.au or www.health.gov.au

For more information:
www.vero.com.au/vero/business-insurance/risk-management
Contact us at riskengineering@vero.com.au