

WAC 296-307-49503 Special fire prevention precautions. When the nature of the work to be performed falls within the scope of WAC 296-307-49501(2), certain additional precautions may be necessary:

(1) Wherever there are floor openings or cracks in the flooring that cannot be closed, precautions must be taken so that no readily combustible materials on the floor below will be exposed to sparks that drop through. The same precautions must be observed with regard to cracks or holes in walls, open doorways, and open or broken windows.

(2) Suitable fire extinguishing equipment must be maintained in a state of readiness for instant use. Such equipment may consist of pails of water, buckets of sand, hose, or portable extinguishers depending upon the nature and quantity of the combustible material exposed.

(3) The following requirements apply to fire watch:

(a) Fire watchers are required whenever welding or cutting is performed in locations where other than a minor fire might develop, or any of the following conditions exist:

(i) Appreciable combustible material, in building construction or contents, closer than 35 feet to the point of operation.

(ii) Appreciable combustibles are more than 35 feet away but are easily ignited by sparks.

(iii) Wall or floor openings within a 35-foot radius expose combustible material in adjacent areas including concealed spaces in walls or floors.

(iv) Combustible materials are adjacent to the opposite side of metal partitions, walls, ceilings, or roofs and are likely to be ignited by conduction or radiation.

(b) Fire watchers must have fire extinguishing equipment readily available and be trained in its use. They must be familiar with facilities for sounding an alarm in the event of a fire. They must watch for fires in all exposed areas, try to extinguish them only when obviously within the capacity of the equipment available, or otherwise sound the alarm. A fire watch must be maintained for at least a half hour after completion of welding or cutting operations to detect and extinguish possible smoldering fires.

(4) Before cutting or welding is permitted, the area must be inspected by the individual responsible for authorizing cutting and welding operations. The responsible individual must designate precautions to be followed in granting authorization to proceed, preferably in the form of a written permit.

(5) Where combustible materials such as paper clippings, wood shavings, or textile fibers are on the floor, the floor must be swept clean for a radius of 35 feet. Combustible floors must be kept wet, covered with damp sand, or protected by fire-resistant shields. Where floors have been wet down, employees operating arc welding or cutting equipment must be protected from possible shock.

(6) Cutting and welding are prohibited in the following situations:

(a) In areas not authorized by management.

(b) In sprinklered buildings while such protection is impaired.

(c) In the presence of explosive atmospheres (mixtures of flammable gases, vapors, liquids, or dusts with air), or where explosive atmospheres may develop inside uncleaned or improperly prepared tanks or equipment that have previously contained such materials, or that may develop in areas with an accumulation of combustible dusts.

(d) In areas near the storage of large quantities of exposed, readily ignitable materials such as bulk sulphur, baled paper, or cotton.

(7) Where practical, all combustibles must be relocated at least 35 feet from the worksite. Where relocation is impractical, combustibles must be protected with flameproofed covers or otherwise shielded with metal or asbestos guards or curtains. Edges of covers at the floor should be tight to prevent sparks from going under them. This precaution is also important at overlaps where several covers are used to protect a large pile.

(8) Ducts and conveyor systems that might carry sparks to distant combustibles must be suitably protected or shut down.

(9) Where cutting or welding is done near walls, partitions, ceiling, or roof of combustible construction, fire-resistant shields or guards must be provided to prevent ignition.

(10) If welding is to be done on a metal wall, partition, ceiling, or roof, precautions must be taken to prevent ignition of combustibles on the other side, due to conduction or radiation, preferably by relocating combustibles. Where combustibles are not relocated, a fire watch on the opposite side from the work must be provided.

(11) Welding must not be attempted on a metal partition, wall, ceiling, or roof having a combustible covering nor on walls or partitions of combustible sandwich-type panel construction.

(12) Cutting or welding on pipes or other metal in contact with combustible walls, partitions, ceilings or roofs must not be undertaken if the work is close enough to cause ignition by conduction.

(13) The employer is responsible for the safe use of cutting and welding equipment on the property and:

(a) Based on fire potentials of plant facilities, the employer must establish areas and procedures for cutting and welding;

(b) The employer must designate an individual responsible for authorizing cutting and welding operations in areas not specifically designed for such processes;

(c) The employer must insist that cutters or welders and their supervisors are suitably trained in the safe operation of their equipment and the safe use of the process; and

(d) The employer must advise all contractors about flammable materials or hazardous conditions of which they may not be aware.

(14) The supervisor must:

(a) Ensure that cutting and welding equipment is handled and used safely.

(b) Determine the combustible materials and hazardous areas present or likely to be present in the work location.

(c) Protect combustibles from ignition by the following:

(i) Have the work moved to a location free from dangerous combustibles;

(ii) If the work cannot be moved, have the combustibles moved to a safe distance from the work or have the combustibles properly shielded against ignition; and

(iii) See that cutting and welding are so scheduled that plant operations that might expose combustibles to ignition are not started during cutting or welding.

(d) Secure authorization for the cutting or welding operations from the designated management representative.

(e) Determine that the cutter or welder secures their approval that conditions are safe before going ahead;

(f) Determine that fire protection and extinguishing equipment are properly located at the site; and

(g) Ensure fire watches are available at the site when required.

(15) Cutting or welding is permitted only in areas that are or have been made fire safe. Within the confines of an operating plant or building, cutting and welding should preferably be done in a specific area designed for such work, such as a maintenance shop or a detached outside location. Such areas should be of noncombustible or fire-resistant construction, essentially free of combustible and flammable contents, and suitably segregated from adjacent areas. When work cannot be moved practically, as in most construction work, the area must be made safe by removing combustibles or protecting combustibles from ignition sources.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 49.17.010, 49.17.040, 49.17.050, and 49.17.060. WSR 20-21-091, § 296-307-49503, filed 10/20/20, effective 11/20/20. Statutory Authority: RCW 49.17.040. WSR 98-24-096, § 296-307-49503, filed 12/1/98, effective 3/1/99. WSR 97-09-013, recodified as § 296-307-49503, filed 4/7/97, effective 4/7/97. Statutory Authority: RCW 49.17.040, [49.17.]050 and [49.17.]060. WSR 96-22-048, § 296-306A-49503, filed 10/31/96, effective 12/1/96.]