



NOTRA DAME BLAZE HIGHLIGHTS RISK OF 'HOT WORKS'

Although investigators now say that the most likely cause of the recent devastating fire at Notre Dame was an electrical short-circuit, initial reports suggested it may have been a stray flame, possibly from welding that ignited the wooden structure. This has highlighted the need for businesses to identify and address the challenges of commissioning Hot Works.

A report by Zurich Insurance, titled 'An in-depth guide to hot works' says that statistics show that Hot Works is one of the biggest risks property owners can face. Zurich's claims data reveals that 15% of all fires in commercial and industrial properties are caused by Hot Works.

What is Hot Work?

Hot Work refers to any work that requires using open flames, applying heat or friction or may generate sparks or heat.

It is defined by the British Standards Institution, (BSI), in BS 9999 as 'any procedure that might involve or have the potential to generate sufficient heat, sparks or flame to cause a fire. Hot Work includes welding, flame cutting, soldering, brazing, grinding and the use of other equipment incorporating a flame, e.g. tar boilers, etc'.

Common types of Hot Work include:

- Welding, brazing and soldering
- Grinding and cutting
- Thawing pipes
- The use of open flames, blow-lamps and torches
- Using bitumen and tar boilers
- The use of hot air blowers and lead heaters

Whilst not an exhaustive list, it does include the most common examples of Hot Work that can pose significant risks without proper safety precautions. No matter who carries it out, they must understand what kind of hazards they present and how to prevent them from causing a potential disaster.

Do I need a permit?

Hot Work can create significant hazards that put workers, those around them and physical structures in danger. It can pose a major fire risk. A stray spark from some Hot Work, such as soldering or welding, can easily ignite combustible materials endangering the building and workers involved alike.

A company engaged in Hot Work must have a suitably tailored safe working system before workers carry it out. Most specifically it must have a Permit to Work.

To create a Permit to Work, a company needs to understand the risks that Hot Work poses and what control measures are necessary to mitigate risks. This is crucial, as such safety precautions require consistent application and proper training. A permit for Hot Work will ensure that everyone understands their responsibilities and that the work does not commence without proper authorisation and safe systems in place.

Common Hazards of Hot Work

Hot Work presents many types of hazards to workers and their environment. For example, Hot Work can harm people by causing burns, entrapment, illness due to fumes, eye damage from debris, or hearing loss due to noise.

However, the most common and significant risk of Hot Work is fire. All types of Hot Work can easily start a fire without proper safety procedures.

Creating a Permit to Work

Due to the levels of risk posed by Hot Work, preparing a Permit to Work is mandatory. According to BS 9999: 'The Hot Work permit procedure, which may be part of an overarching safe system of the Permit to Work procedure should be followed before any Hot Work is allowed in or near a building. This is to ensure that correct actions are taken before Hot Work commences, during the operation and afterwards.'

In order to fulfil this requirement, a business and its officers, must know how to create a Permit to Work.

To get a Permit to Work a company must include in its application:

- Details of the work. What type of Hot Work needs carrying out?
- Hazards and Risks. What are the associated risks of the Hot Work?
- Precautions and Procedures. What steps will you put in place and apply before and during the work?
- Personal protective equipment. Do people need to wear protective goggles, face masks, gloves etc?
- Reference to isolation certificates. Does any nearby equipment need isolating before work can start?
- Authorisation and acceptance. This includes those involved in creating, implementing and following the permit.
- Training and Competence. Do people need any training before they can carry out the Hot Work?
- Handover procedures. If the people doing the work swap shifts, what procedure will your workforce follow to ensure they change over safely?
- Hand back and cancellation procedures. Once work is finished, or needs cancelling, who is in charge of managing this?

As a property owner, what should I do if I am commissioning Hot Works as part of building works or restorations?

During the tender stage, you should request qualifications and adequacy and suitability of contractors and ask for their 'Permit to Work', which is mandatory.

Your insurance may have conditions or exclusions that insurers could impose if there is to be use of heat, so please check your insurance policy. If you are in doubt, contact your usual Towergate Insurance Brokers Advisor.



To find out more contact your Towergate Adviser

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