

Hot Work Permits – Ask The Expert



Fire watch requirements depend on the type of hot work being performed and the level of ignition risk present.

In most hot work programs, fire watch is a standard control measure, but it may be exempted when a documented assessment confirms the work presents negligible fire risk.

QUESTION

When is a fire watch not required while a hot work permit is in effect?

ANSWER

A fire watch is generally not required only when the hot work does not create an ignition risk and when the hot work program allows an exemption based on a documented risk assessment.

EXPLANATION

In practice, a fire watch is typically not required when the work does not involve open flame or spark-producing activity and the area contains no combustible or flammable materials, including dusts, vapours, or hidden combustibles. There should be no combustible surfaces within the hazard radius, and no penetrations, cracks, ducts, or

voids where heat or sparks could travel.

The permit issuer must confirm there is no risk of ignition on the opposite side of the work surface and verify that fire suppression equipment is immediately available and workers are trained to use it. Even then, the exemption only applies if the governing standard and internal policy do not mandate fire watch for that specific task.

Many hot work programs require fire watch for all hot work regardless of conditions, so requirements should always be confirmed against the applicable standard (e.g., WorkSafeBC guidance, NFPA 51B, or internal policy).