The potential for fire is present in any workplace. But, if you're aware of the causes and conditions, if you're prepared, and if you think before you act, the risk of a workplace fire and its damaging effects – on you, your co-workers or your company – can be minimized.

Following good housekeeping practices is crucial to fire prevention. That means keep heating and electrical equipment clean, clear, and in good repair; regularly clean ducts and fume hood filters; keep ovens and ranges clean and free of spilled fats, sugar, sauces, etc.; keep paper products, aerosols, and other flammable materials away from heating elements; and store flammable liquids away from heat sources, exits or escape routes. To avoid electrically caused fires, check, replace or have professionally fixed any appliance with frayed or loose cords and wires or cords that get hot during use. Avoid running cords or wires under rugs and carpets or near a heat source; and keep them out of doorways where they can become worn.

Ensure that fire protection equipment (i.e., sprinklers, smoke/heat detectors, alarms, fire hoses, fire extinguishers, and fire blankets) are maintained, available for use, and not impaired or concealed. Make sure fire extinguishers correspond to the potential risk. Know where they're located and how to use them.

Besides training in fire prevention and protection, make sure you understand company emergency communication and evacuation procedures. Know the location of fire alarms and the telephone numbers for emergency response personnel. Report a fire, even if it seems minor. Fire fighters would rather arrive and find nothing to do than be called after it's too late to save individuals or property. Keep in mind that all workers are responsible for preventing fires, but not everyone is expected to fight major fires. Fire fighting is best handled by trained professionals.

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