



Hardwood Manufacturers Association

665 Rodi Road, Suite 305, Pittsburgh, PA 15235 – 412-244-0440 – www.HMAmembers.org

The A-B-C's for all 'wood niche' businesses - Common Hazards Review

"A casual attitude towards safety = CASUALTY"

All too often business owners, along with their managers, spend time reviewing "new" operations, machinery, equipment, and products while inadvertently overlooking the everyday or "common" hazards that can also pose danger.

So, as a review of the common occurrences that should not fall between the cracks - smoking, housekeeping, accumulation of sawdust piles, brush and weeds, building roof and siding damage, and common electrical hazards - the following reminders and control strategies are being presented for review and consideration. Take note, please.

Smoking - From sawmills to retail dealer operations, **Smoking** is a severity exposure that is present in all wood operations. Yet careless and uncontrolled smoking, responsible for many building fires, is an exposure that can be easily identified and controlled.

"No Smoking" signs should be prominently posted throughout all building and yard areas. Smoking should only be allowed in designated smoking areas. Butt receptacles should be provided and the use of the receptacles should be strictly enforced. Employees smoking in non-designated areas should be subject to disciplinary action up to and including discharge from employment.

Housekeeping - Due to current economic challenges, **Housekeeping** has re-emerged as a serious hazard of mill and yard locations because many employees who were responsible for housekeeping have been either laid off or reassigned to other duties. As a result, in many operations general housekeeping has deteriorated, creating hazardous conditions that are contributing to building fires.

Be sure to police all areas for accumulations of wood waste. Remove waste from under machines and equipment, from under the sawmill floor areas and from around tail wheels. And don't forget about waste that may be contacting building wall and roof areas. All waste needs to be removed to locations a minimum distance of 100 feet from all building areas.

Sawdust - Accumulations of **Sawdust** from sawmill and millwork operations, whether inside of buildings or on roof areas, present both fire and collapse hazards and should be cleared from around buildings on a regular basis.

Sawdust contacting buildings and machinery/equipment should be considered fugitive dust and should be moved to alternate locations a minimum of 100 feet from all buildings areas.

Brush and Weeds - With the economic restriction on man-hours, many times Mother Nature "takes over" and the growth of **Brush and Weeds** in and around building areas becomes a potential hazard.

As a safeguard, all brush and weeds, within a minimum of 20 feet of all building areas, should be cut down and removed from adjacent building contact areas.

Building Damage – **Building** roof and siding **Damage** are typically the result of forklifts or other vehicles contacting siding and roof soffit areas while moving materials.



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To safeguard against personal injury and further building damage, all damaged siding and roofing materials, including soffits, should be repaired or replaced, as soon as possible.

Electrical Hazards – Electrical issues present a severe hazard for all “Wood Niche” business operations and are responsible for a high percentage of building fires. A program of periodic visual inspection of common **Electrical Hazards** is crucial in identifying and controlling the source cause of many building fires.

Some specifics to look for:

- Extension cords should be UL listed and approved.
- Never use damaged or frayed cables, cords or cord ends.
- Junction and panel boxes should be in good repair with no damaged or missing covers or knock-outs.
- Use of romex (sheathed plastic coated wiring) should not be present in any commercial operation and all identified romex should be replaced with rigid conduit or BX cables.

As a business owner looking to prevent loss, regularly reviewing common hazards is a must. And while finding the available man-hours to inspect for and monitor common hazards may be challenging, it is time well spent, especially when it lessens the probability of damage to your business operations.

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