



Hardwood Manufacturers Association

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Eliminate common workplace fire hazards

When the bottom-line is life or death, can there ever be too many safety reminders? Too often, common fire hazards get lost “in the big picture.” Take a look at the following helpful information from the Pennsylvania Lumbermens Mutual Insurance Company and lessen the threat of disaster to your employees and to your business operations.

1. **Smoking** is a severity exposure present in all wood operations from sawmills to retail dealers. But careless, uncontrolled smoking, responsible for many building fires, can be easily controlled. “No Smoking signs should be prominently posted throughout all building and yard areas. Smoking should only be allowed in designated non-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.”
2. **Housekeeping** has re-emerged as a serious hazard of mill and yard locations. With fewer employees due to layoffs, good housekeeping practices have diminished; hazardous conditions have increased. “Accumulations of wood waste located inside of buildings, such as under machines and equipment, under the sawmill floor areas, around tail wheel, and contacting building wall and roof areas need to be cleaned up and moved to locations a minimum distance of 100 feet from all building areas.”
3. **Sawdust** piles, accumulating inside of buildings and on roof areas, present fire and collapse hazards. “Accumulations of sawdust from sawmill and millwork operations 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.”
4. **Brush** and **weeds** allowed to grow in and around building areas is dangerous. “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.
5. **Electrical issues** present severe hazards and are responsible for a high percentage of building fires. A program of periodic inspections of electrical hazards however, can control the source cause of many fires. “Specific things to look for include the use of flexible wire extension cords, 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. All identified romex should be replaced with rigid conduit or BX cables.”

Remember, “If you are aware of it, take care of it.” Visit www.plmins.com for additional safety tips and reminders.