

SCP TRIBUNE[®]

To Post? or Not to Post?

A firewatch, that is. Often that's a decision for the Competent Person.

OSHA's Shipyard Standard (Subpart D –Steel Repairs) lists some 8 situations when you must post a fire watch. Those examples boil down to two questions:

First, do you see materials that can catch fire? Of course, this is no mystery to the alert SCP; he or she notes any rags, linens, cardboard, foam, drapes, rags, plastics and oil puddles.

The second part of the discussion is: how close is your hot work to that burnable stuff? OSHA says if it is within 35 feet (including decks below and above) and is not isolated from the hot work sparks by some barrier, such as a bulkhead or deck, that burnable stuff demands a Fire Watch.

A good example would be hot work in the engine room uptake space, or near a ventilation duct. When the SCP sees those sparks are going to fall a long way he will make sure a Fire Watch is there to wet down their landing area.



Furnishings burn with enthusiasm. If sparks may reach them from nearby hot work they demand a fire watch.

TRAINING

Shipyard Competent Person

3-Day Initial

Oct 5-7 @ SSC

Nov 2-4 @ SSC

Dec 7-9 @ SSC



1-Day Updates

Oct 6 @ SSC

Oct 19 @ Fremont

Nov 3 @ SSC

Nov 16 @ Fremont

Dec 8 @ SSC

Dec 14 @ Fremont

(Fremont @ Fishermen's Terminal
SSC: Georgetown Campus
Just off I-5: Corson Ave)
Directions can be found at
www.soundtestinginc.com or
Call Peggy or Bonnie: 206-932-0206

Even when combustibles are isolated by, say, a bulkhead, the SCP also has to check to make sure they're far enough away from the hot steel so they won't catch fire from conducted heat.

By the way, OSHA's Subpart D is not the end of the discussion; your Company Safety Program may well have a Fire Watch policy much more thorough and careful than the OSHA rules. Ask around before making final decisions on whether to Post, or Not to Post. We at Sound Testing (206 932 0206) would love to be part of such a discussion.

Trustworthy Insulation?

A shipyard wished to heavy-duty weld 3x3x1/2" angle-iron supports on the exterior sideshell below the crew's quarters windows. Of course, the competent person was extremely curious: Was the void opposite Safe for Hot Work? Or not?

He asked the carpenters to remove some stateroom battens and, dislodging a panel, inspected the void behind for fire danger inspection.

Between the paneling and sideshell the Competent Person saw what he expected to see: Good News! Generally well-behaved fibrous insulation.



But seeing what you expect is not the end of an investigation. There is fibrous insulation, and fibrous insulation: It is not all the same. So, next came the fire test. Placed on a red-hot surface, an insulation sample would not catch fire. It passed the test. But if the insulation is indeed fibrous, why do a flame test at all?

It turns out that even glass fiber insulation can be a problem, as it was in a towboat engine room. The fiberglass behaved itself, but the rubber vapor barrier glued to it did not. Catching fire from hot work on the deck above, flaming rubber dropped into a wireway below. The bill? More than \$100,000.

Aside from vapor barrier problems, not all fibrous insulation is trustworthy. For instance, an old formulation of plasticized wood fiber is indeed fibrous, but nonetheless burns brightly (note image).

The subject here is not fibrous insulation: the subject is our need to Deal in the World of Certainty. A hands-on flame test, putting a torch flame under material on sheet metal, will give you combustibility information unavailable anywhere else.

Because Shipyard Competent People are usually craftspeople with many other duties, they cannot lounge about the workplace after they have done their safety inspection. They post their reports and go on with their work lives.

And as the Competent Person departs the worksite his acute observations, experienced judgment and excellent testing exist only in the SCP Report, taped to a bulkhead or hanging near the gangway. So, the form, content and legibility of that SCP Report are all his fellow employees have to work with.

