

All the tools for a safer workplace

As a Tradie you've got to go where the work is. And that means lots of different sites at lots of different times. The one common feature? Each site will have at least some fire, theft, and security risks, which are worth keeping in mind.

Fires are often started by faulty electrical equipment, inadequately controlled hot work, or carelessly discarded smoking materials. The damage can mean loss of tools and materials, delayed projects, and even income.

It will come as no surprise that theft of tools and equipment is also a common cause of loss.

Here are some top tips to help you manage fire and security risks when working on a customer's site.



Dress for the occasion



Personal protective equipment (PPE) is a 'must have' legal requirement on all sites, no matter the size of the job at hand.

Best practice

- If in doubt about the specific requirements of a site, check with the PPE information on the WorkSafe website.

Must haves

- ✓ Make sure you have the correct PPE to undertake the work safely e.g. safety boots, safety glasses, high visibility clothing, hearing protection, gloves etc.

Looking after your stuff



Chances are you've worked hard for your tools and gear – so it's worth spending a few minutes thinking about how to prevent them being damaged or stolen.

Best practice

- Park your vehicle where you can see it. Make sure it's locked and activate the vehicle alarm (consider installing if you don't have one).
- Keep tools and equipment out of sight when not using them, such as a secure room or lock-up, especially after hours. Check on tools daily to make sure they are safe and sound. Lock mobile plant and keep keys in a secure place.
- Mark or engrave equipment so it can be identified if it's stolen.
- Where possible work in pairs so that at least one of the team can keep an eye of tools and equipment. If left unattended lock tools in a lockbox.
- If you've already lost tools or equipment to theft, be extra careful after you've replaced these items as offenders often return for gear that has been replaced.

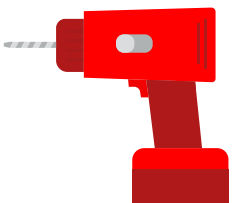
Tools and equipment



Best practice

- Always use the right tools and equipment for the job and make sure they're in good working order, well maintained and safe to use. Electrical equipment should be tested and tagged.
- Don't leave tools and equipment anywhere they can be tripped or driven over.
- When working at height take precautions to ensure tools and equipment cannot fall to the ground. For smaller tools use a lanyard secured to a wrist and for larger equipment secure the lanyard to a suitable fixed fastening point.
- Educate yourself and your team about how to maintain and use tools to extend their life.

Battery powered tools



Lithium Ion batteries are great batteries but have hidden fire risks if mistreated.

Best practice

- Operate the equipment following manufacturers guidelines.
- Battery power tools should only be recharged using the charger provided.
- When batteries need replacing source the same type and manufacturer as the original battery.

For more information check out our *Lithium-Ion Batteries Guide*.

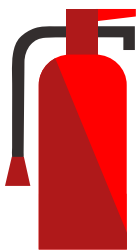
Check/control hazards



Good practice

- Make sure that it is safe to work in an area, on a machine or utility before undertaking any work.
 - Identify all nearby utilities such as water, gas, electricity before work starts.
 - Check that machinery is deenergised, depressurised and at safe temperatures before starting work. Follow all site lock out/tag out procedures for areas, machinery and services.
- Check the work area for potential hazards such as dust and nearby combustibles. Take steps to eliminate or control these.
 - Keep the work area clean too, removing dust and debris as often as necessary and practicable. Safely dispose of materials subject to spontaneous ignition, such as oily waste and rags soaked with paint, linseed oil or other ignitable liquids. At a minimum do this at the end of each work shift.

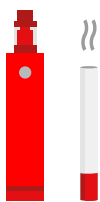
Be prepared for an emergency



Best practice

- Identify the location of the nearest fire exits and fire extinguishers before starting work. If needed take your own fire extinguisher suitable for the risk.
- Make sure fire extinguishers have been serviced in the last 12 months.
 - Consider getting some training for you and your team on how to use a fire extinguisher correctly and safely.

Smoking/Vaping



Best practice

- If you or anyone in your team are a smoker or vaper find out where smoking is allowed on site and only smoke/vape there.

Automatic sprinklers and fire detection



Must do

- ✓ Always try and keep automatic sprinklers or automatic fire detection systems operational while work is taking place. Sometimes this is not possible, and the system needs to be wholly or partially disabled.
- ✓ Make sure you follow the site's Fire system impairment procedure or as a minimum the fire system isolation procedures contained in NZ4541 (Automatic fire sprinkler systems) or NZS4512 (Fire detection and alarm systems in buildings).

Passive fire protection systems



Fire walls, fire doors and other passive fire protection features (such as in cable ducts) are important safeguards to prevent uncontrolled fire spread within a space or building.

Must do

- ✓ Avoid making holes or penetrations through these unless necessary and understand what is required to reinstate these to the way they were.
- ✓ Don't undertake work on passive fire systems if you don't have the required knowledge and expertise – call in a specialist.

Asbestos



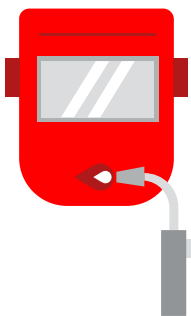
Older buildings are likely to contain asbestos materials. Take time to identify the location of these materials.

Must do

- ✓ Check the asbestos register to identify location where asbestos is present.

- ✓ Make areas with asbestos safe, or remove it, before other work commences. If you aren't qualified to work on asbestos materials don't, get a specialist contractor to do this work.

Hot Work

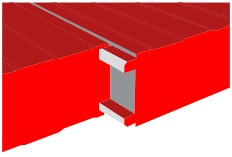


Must do

- ✓ Remove all combustibles from the area before starting hot work such as cutting, welding, grinding.
- ✓ Protect combustibles that can't be moved using welding screens or covers before starting work.
- ✓ Make sure sparks or hot slag cannot penetrate unseen areas such as between wooden floorboards, through floor/wall penetrations.
- ✓ Use extreme caution when installing a torch-applied roof system or working near timber, insulated sandwich panel or aluminium composite panel building materials. For guidance on common hot work safeguards check out our *Hot Work Advice Guide*.

- ✓ Make sure you follow the correct procedure in obtaining a hot work permit if the site operates a permit system.
- ✓ Obtain a new permit if the work extends beyond the specified time period of the original permit.
- ✓ Ensure equipment such as welders, gas flames etc are safe before going on smoko breaks, finishing up for the day or responding to an evacuation alarm (if it's safe to do so).

Sandwich panel and other combustible building materials

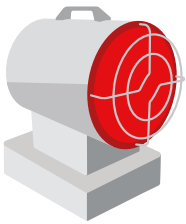


Must do

- ✓ Do not use any tools that could produce heat when working on combustible building materials such as insulated sandwich or aluminium composite panels, as this is a major fire risk.

- ✓ Make sure all penetrations made in the panel are sealed using appropriate methods and non-combustible materials. When you finish work there should be no exposed inner core. See our *Sandwich Panels Guide* for more information.

Heaters



Working in large cold spaces in winter is not pleasant and sometimes heaters are required.

Best practice

- Make sure heaters are allowed on site, fit for purpose and safe to use in the area you are working in. They should be positioned so that they can't set fire to anything or cause injury to people.

Hazardous substances



Must do

- ✓ Make sure you understand how to safely use, handle and store any hazardous substances that you need to use on site. Reviewing the safety data sheets for these substances will help.

- ✓ Have a spill kit available to deal with a leak or spill.

Good business practice



Best practice

- Ensure your customer, business and financial information is backed up and secure from cyber-attacks or laptop failure.
- On receipt of goods, check they are not damaged and the order is complete. Delay in identifying either of these may mean it's difficult to prove when and how the item was damaged or that items were missing when delivered.

- Ensure any sub-contractors working for you are adequately qualified for the work they are undertaking and aware of safety requirements.
- Protect your business investment and livelihood with the right type and amount of insurance. Even if you're proactive about managing risk, unexpected events can happen. It's important to check any sub-contractors have adequate liability cover too.

Visit vero.co.nz/risk-profiler to check out our other advice sheets for more tips and in-depth information about managing risk.

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