

Risk A/TSM Work

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Benjamin Franklin 1736



We are pleased to introduce the next edition of **Risk A/TSM Work**, a forum dedicated to sharing safety and loss control tips with our brokers and insureds.

Risk A/TSM is our proprietary risk management approach which promotes informed risk analysis based on two behavioral factors — **A**ptitude and **T**olerance.

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Fire Prevention in Commercial Properties

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Fire Prevention Week

The tradition of publicly promoting fire prevention in the U.S. started when President Calvin Coolidge proclaimed the first Fire Prevention Week on October 4-10, 1925 commemorating the Great Chicago Fire. This catastrophic conflagration, which began on October 8, 1871, killed more than 250 people, left 100,000 homeless, and destroyed 17,400 structures. Fire Prevention Week has been credited with reducing residential home fires as well as fire-related fatalities and injuries by promoting fire prevention practices such as the use of smoke alarms and escape plans. In addition, fire prevention education and fire drills are now included in school education curriculums across the U.S.

Commercial Property Fire Hazards

Fire prevention programs are critical to almost any commercial property where combustible materials are present. Improper hot work, faulty equipment or machinery, improper handling of flammable liquids, faulty electrical systems and even arson can result in the unforeseen ignition of these materials. Other fire hazards commonly present at commercial properties such as manufacturing and distribution facilities, hotels and office buildings include housekeeping and waste control, electrical systems, heating and cooling systems and employee smoking areas.

In addition to these exposures, commercial properties can also have hazards that are unique to the specific operations and processes taking place at a particular facility. Special fire hazards can stem from the materials being produced, processed or stored by a particular facility as well as by the machinery and equipment used in a facility. For example, the storage, use and disposal of combustible materials utilized in certain manufacturing process can present severe fire hazards. These materials include paper, wood, or plastics kept in high-piled or rack storage arrangements and flammable or combustible liquids stored, dispensed and used in spray-finishing on-site. Since the special hazards potentially present at manufacturing plants and other types of commercial properties can vary from location to location, a hazard assessment should be conducted to evaluate the specific fire hazards at each site.

Loss Prevention at Commercial Properties

Loss prevention measures at commercial properties typically involve two components – physical protection and human element (fire safety) programs.

In terms of physical protection, the mitigation of potential fire loss should include measures that limit ignition sources and apply appropriate fire protection principles to the property. OSHA regulations, NFPA codes and standards, and FM Global data sheets provide requirements, guidance, and safeguards against fire hazards to assist property owners and managers in developing programs to address hazards identified in the site assessment.

However, the most important physical protection measure to limit fire losses is the use of automatic sprinkler protection systems. Automatic sprinklers activate during a fire, helping to control the spread of fire while triggering the facility's fire alarm system to notify building occupants and the fire department. These systems have proven extremely effective in controlling fires and limiting loss when properly designed, installed, inspected and maintained. Industry data shows sprinkler-protected properties incur smaller losses in terms of total cost compared to un-sprinklered properties.

Fire safety programs for building workers and visitors have also been proven to assist in loss prevention. Hot work permit programs (information in NFPA 51B), emergency planning and emergency response teams (information in NFPA 1600), self-inspection programs (information in NFPA 25), and impairment handling programs (information in NFPA 25) are among the fire safety programs management can implement to mitigate fire hazards at a commercial facility.

The combination of proactive physical fire protection measures and human element programs can go a long way in preventing and minimizing the fire losses at any commercial building or manufacturing facility. Fire Prevention Week is a good reminder to review and update these programs for any changes to the property's operations. Together, employees and management can make a big impact in maintaining a safe working environment.