



LOSS CONTROL NEWSLETTER

July 2019

Talking Trash: Don't Get Burned

Garbage is not just smelly; it can pose a real threat to facilities. If not handled properly, garbage can lead to a fire that can burn down an entire operation.

In one case, a fire broke out in a metal dumpster on a loading dock. Flames quickly spread into the building, causing over half a million dollars in damage.

Because trash cannot be eliminated altogether, it is important to take action to reduce fire hazards in and around the facility where you work. The following are easy tips to protect against the hazards that trash may cause.

Trash Management

- Empty trash cans as soon as they fill up and keep storage areas free of clutter.
- Remove all garbage at the end of every workday and transfer it to outdoor containers.
- Cover outdoor trash containers and place them away from buildings.
- Do not place outdoor trash containers against a wall unless it is fire resistant.

- Do not allow paper and other trash to gather outside of garbage or recycling receptacles, and never store this material near hot equipment, electrical outlets or smoking areas.
- Do not smoke near trash receptacles. Put out smoking materials properly and throw them away in designated areas.

Do's and Don'ts of What to Throw Away

- Avoid throwing out materials that could produce toxic or corrosive fumes when burned, such as rubber, foam plastic, aerosol containers and PVC wiring insulation.
- Do not throw away combustible materials such as paint thinners, acetone, propane tanks, gasoline containers, used motor oil, automotive batteries or appliances.
- Place oily rags in an Underwriters Laboratories listed oily waste container or an airtight, noncombustible metal container filled with a solution of water and oil breakdown detergent. Take the container to your local hazardous waste disposal center or arrange a special pickup by your garbage collection service.

If a fire does occur, be familiar with your facility's emergency plan and escape routes. Immediately evacuate the building if the alarm sounds, unless you have been authorized to put out small fires with a fire extinguisher or if you are tasked with performing specific facility operations before evacuating.

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Extension Cord Safety

Extension cords are commonly used at work and at home. Did you know that there are different types of cords designed for different uses? Ensure that you use the correct cord for your equipment and work conditions to prevent electrical shock and fires.

Take proper precautions when using extension cords:

- Make sure the cord power rating is at least as high as the power tool or device power rating. The cord power rating is a number listed on the cord jacket as either amps or American Wire Gauge (AWG).
- Cords approved for outdoor use are typically identified by “Outdoor” or “W” on the cord jacket. Never use indoor cords outdoors.
- Some cords are designed to resist moisture, heat or chemicals. For example, cords with plastic jackets are recommended for use around solvents or oils. Oil-resistant cords will have the letter “O” stamped onto the jacket.
- Power tools should not be used with flat, two-wire cords meant for light duty that have only a single layer of insulation.
- Use a cord of the correct length for the job. Do not plug multiple cords together to cover a distance; this can cause a fire.

Once you have found the right extension cord for the job, make sure you follow these safety procedures:

- Inspect extension cords before each use to make sure the cord and plug are in good condition. Never use a damaged or frayed cord.
- Insert the plug fully into the outlet and uncoil the cord to reduce the risk of overheating.
- Make sure electrical equipment is turned off before you plug it into an extension cord.

By following these simple tips you can make sure that you’re using the right cord to get the job done safely.

If you have any questions or need assistance regarding workplace safety, please contact your independent insurance agent or the Auto-Owners Loss Control HelpLine at 855.586.5388, or send an email to LossControlSupport@aoins.com.

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