

# Howard Talks Tech

## Responsibilities of Persons Assigned Fire Watch Duties

Unsafe hot work (welding, torch cutting, brazing, propane soldering) is one of the leading causes of fires in the workplace. A recent study analyzed several hundred *hot-work* initiated fires. The average loss per fire was 1.4 million dollars. All these losses are preventable through the use of appropriate precautions and work practices. One precaution is the use of a “Fire Watch”. Let’s define Fire Watch: Trained personnel in attendance during the entire cutting and welding operation and immediately available to extinguish a fire or take other effective action. The OSHA Maritime Regulations state that each designated fire watch person must be trained:



- ***Before first being assigned to fire watch duties.***
- Whenever there is a change in operations that presents a new or different hazard.
- Whenever the employer has reason to believe that the fire watch's understanding is inadequate.
- ***Annually thereafter***

### The General Duties of a Fire Watch person are to:

1. Review the specific type work & precautions described on the “***Hot Work Permit***”.
2. Have fire-extinguishing equipment readily available, minimum rating of 2A.
3. Monitor the welding/cutting work on both sides of walls/floors & be on the alert for signs of a fire.
4. Correct or stop conditions which may lead to a fire & report any incipient fires.
  - a. Move cover or wet combustible materials.
5. Try to extinguish fires only when obviously within the capacity of the equipment available.
6. Be at the work site to monitor for smoldering fires while work is in progress and remain for at least 60 minutes (NJ Fire Code) following the job. If the firewatcher has to leave a competent replacement should assume the duties until he returns or is replaced.

### Records must be kept to demonstrate that workers have been trained

- Employers must ensure that records include the employee's name, the trainer's name, the type of training and the date(s) on which the training took place.
- Training record must be kept for one year from the time it was made or until it is replaced.