



February 17 — False Safe Distance

Employees were welding handrail, while about 10' away were sheets of plywood, 2x4, and tote bag, no screens, no fire blanket covering anything	I told them you're not 35' away from combustibles.
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Employees were welding handrail while sheets of plywood, 2x4 lumber, and a tote bag were located approximately 10 feet away, with no fire screens or fire blankets in place.

**A spark flew out from metal bright,
And found some wood just out of sight.
Move it, cover it, shield it right,
So small sparks don't start a fight.**

Ten feet feels far enough until sparks start flying. Welding doesn't just create heat; it throws molten metal, slag, and sparks that can travel farther than expected and land where no one is watching. Combustible materials don't need direct flame to ignite they only need one unnoticed ember.

Distance without protection is not a control.

Hazards

- Ignition of combustible materials
- Rapid fire spread to surrounding structures
- Hidden smoldering fires that ignite later
- Burns and smoke inhalation
- Property and equipment damage

Stats

- Hot work is a leading cause of industrial fires
- Many job-site fires start from sparks reaching nearby combustibles
- Smoldering materials can ignite minutes or hours after welding stops
- Fire blankets and screens are proven controls for spark containment

Words of Wisdom

- Sparks travel farther than you think.
- If it can burn, protect it or move it.

Pause and Think

Hot work often feels controlled because the welder is focused on the arc. But the real danger is what happens outside the welder's line of sight. Combustibles sitting nearby become targets for stray sparks, and without barriers, no one sees the ignition until it's too late. Planning the area around the weld is just as important as the weld itself.

- What materials around us can burn?
- How far can sparks actually travel?
- What controls should be in place before welding begins?