



Yakima County Fire Marshal's Office
Public Information Handout FP-18
Fire Safety for Buildings Under Construction



International Fire Code Chapter 33

The International Fire Code (IFC) requires that specific safeguards be placed for buildings that are under construction or alteration. Fires that may occur during construction, alteration, or demolition operations can be eliminated or controlled through the early planning, scheduling, and implementation of fire prevention measures, fire protection systems, rapid communications, and onsite security.

Fires during construction, alteration, or demolition operations pose a significant threat. The fire potential is inherently greater during these operations than in the completed structure due to the unprotected state of the structure, large quantities of combustible materials and debris, and the presence of ignition sources such as temporary heating devices, cutting/welding/plumbers torch operations, as well as smoking. The threat of arson is also greater during construction and demolition operations due to the availability of combustible materials on-site and the open access.



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The owner must designate a person to be responsible for the Fire Prevention program and development of a Fire Safety program that addresses at least the following:

- Development of a pre-fire plan with the Fire Department.
- Training on basic fire safety.
- Rapid Communications – a means to report a fire (such as a telephone) on site. Post the street address of the construction site adjacent to the telephone.
- Fire Department access - Provide access to the job site for Fire Department apparatus from the start of the project through completion. The all-weather access roadway must extend to within 150' of all portions of the exterior walls of the building.
- Lighted stairway - Provide at least one temporary lighted stairway when construction extends to a height of 50' or more. Where necessary, clearly identify the exit pathway and provide appropriate exit signage, including floor designations.
- On-site security – considerations should include a secured perimeter, guarded entrance points, video surveillance, and guard patrols.
- Good Housekeeping – accumulations of combustible waste material, dust, and debris shall be removed from the structure and its immediate vicinity at the end of each work shift or more frequently as necessary for safe operation.
- Fire Protection Systems – provide and maintain free access from the street to fire hydrants and to outside connections for standpipes, sprinklers, or other fire extinguishing equipment, whether permanent or temporary.
 - Hydrants – operational prior to any combustible construction
 - Standpipes – available for use during construction in buildings 4 or more stories, before construction progress is more than 40' above the lowest level of Fire Department access.
- Extension cords – maintain extension cords free from damage, removing all damaged equipment and cords from service.
- Special Hazards - Temporary heating equipment shall be listed, well maintained and monitored to assure continued safe operation. Clearances to combustible materials shall be maintained in accordance with its listing. Fuel supplies for LPG gas fire heaters shall comply with IFC Chapter 61.
- Smoking – smoking shall be permitted only in designated areas and not in the vicinity of hazardous operations or combustible/flammable materials.
- Storage and use of flammable and combustible liquids and flammable gases – Storage of Class I and Class II liquids shall not exceed 60 gallons within 15' of the structure. Storage areas shall be appropriately posted as “No Smoking” areas. These areas shall also be appropriately posted with marking in accordance with NFPA 704.

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- Welding, grinding, roofing operations (hot asphalt or torch down) – A dedicated fire watch shall occur throughout the operations and continue for 30 minutes after conclusion. Prior to commencement of operations, the area shall be clear of combustibles or the combustibles shall be protected.
- Parking – do not allow vehicles to be parked in buildings under construction until the fire sprinkler system is placed in service (including water flow notification) and the parking garage has been approved by the building official and fire marshal.
- Job/Dry shacks – do not locate job/dry shacks in buildings under construction. A job/ dry shack must be separated from the building by not less than 20' unless the building is equipped with a fire sprinkler system that has been placed in service and has adequate emergency egress and ventilation provided.

Notes:

1. The fire department may require additional mitigation measures based on site/project-specific issues.
2. If you have any questions need assistance or additional information, please contact your local fire department.

For more detailed information, please refer to International Fire Code Chapter 33 and 61, National Fire Protection Association Standard 241 and 58, and consult with your fire department, insurance carrier, and/or the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries at 1.800.547.8367 or www.lni.gov



If you have any questions or need further clarification, please contact Yakima County Building and Fire Safety at (509) 574-2300.