

Fire Prevention: Separate Fuel from Ignition

Todd Jerome Jenkins | v1.0 | Reviewed October 6, 2026 | Discussion + field checks

Why this matters

A clean area can become a fire hazard when a waste bin moves, hot work begins nearby or a product changes. Look at the combination of fuel, ignition and actual work conditions before the first spark or heat source is introduced.

Objective: Identify fuel and ignition hazards and verify the required separation and protection for today's task.

Key hazards or failure points

Combustible waste near heat; leaking or wrongly stored products; damaged electrical equipment; unauthorized hot work; impaired fire protection; blocked escape routes.

Practical controls

- Remove unnecessary combustible material and use the prescribed storage and disposal arrangements for products and waste. Check the actual label, SDS and site plan for handling requirements.
- Control ignition sources through the applicable work procedure and authorization. Required permits, fire-watch arrangements and equipment safeguards must match the task and nearby exposures.
- Keep exits and fire-protection access available. Report damaged equipment or system impairments through the site process. Plan for changes introduced by other crews, deliveries or moving work areas.

Verify It in the Field

From a safe position, trace where heat, sparks or vapors could reach. Compare the actual setup with the governing permit, instructions and requirements. Do not invent a universal clearance or assume a wall stops every exposure.

Check containers, closures, storage location and waste collection against the product and site requirements. Verify that cleanup or relocation has actually happened before approving the affected work.

Have the authorized lead confirm required permits, fire-watch coverage and protection status. Check accessible exits and equipment. Technical tests belong to authorized people using approved methods. Record actual findings and change triggers.

Stop and reassess

Hold work for an uncontrolled fuel/ignition combination, leak, damaged equipment, unexpected fumes or missing required protection. Reassess a changed task or nearby activity. If fire occurs, raise the alarm and follow the emergency plan; this talk does not authorize firefighting.

Ask the crew

1. What can burn here, and what could ignite it?
2. Which nearby activity could change that answer?
3. What must be checked again when the work moves?

Before ignition: verify the actual conditions and required protection.

Sources: OSHA 1910.39, 1926.151 and exit-route requirements.

Free next step: [JHA/JSA planning & field-verification worksheet](#)

Expanded guidance, references, supervisor check and attendance record accompany this talk.