Welding Hazards and Prevention Tips

Welding doesn’t have to be a dangerous activity. Paying attention to the work space, knowing the hazards, and following safety protocols will keep you safe. Unfortunately when those three things don’t happen, you and others working nearby can suffer serious injury.

In this Safety Talk, we’ll look at the potential incidents and injuries caused by welding hazards, and some common sense tips on how to prevent them.

What Can Go Wrong

Safety is critical when working as a welder. You face a variety of hazards every day and, if you don’t pay attention to what you’re doing, injury is likely in your future.

Some welding accidents that cause injury are:

- Fires ignited from scrap, stored material, or even the building where welding is being done.
- Explosions caused by the ignition of flammable gas or vapors in pipes, tanks, and other containers.
- Electrocution from defective equipment or improperly hooked up equipment.

The most common injury of "hot work" is a burn. Burns can be caused by flying pieces of hot metal caught up in clothing or, for more inexperienced workers, leaning against a hot surface for too long.

Welding flash, or burns to unprotected eyes, is caused by the ultraviolet radiation emitted by an arc welder. It isn’t permanent but can cause serious discomfort!

You should also be careful not to inhale toxic fumes during the heating of metals or welding when in confined or poorly ventilated areas. It can cause permanent respiratory damage.

How To Protect Yourself

While accidents and injuries are common when welding, you can prevent them from happening by taking a few simple steps.

First, be alert. Keep your eyes open and pay attention to everything that is going on around you. Don’t let co-workers or noise distract you from the task at hand.

Second, wear the correct personal protective equipment (PPE). This is a major preventative measure all welders can take.

Consider wearing the following PPE:

- Filtered eyewear such as face shields, goggles, or glasses. Workers nearby should also wear appropriate eye protection.
- Non-flammable head protection.
• Leather jackets and aprons.
• Welding gloves and long-sleeved shirts with buttoned cuffs and a collar.
• Pants and high-cut leather safety boots.

Another thing you can do to prevent injury is to keep your work area well ventilated. Ventilation and exhaust moves the fumes away from the work area so you can breathe without inhaling toxic fumes. You should also wear the right type of respirator, which will depend on the metal you work with.

Finally, stop fires and explosions before they start. Do this by:

• Placing screens and shields around the welding area.
• Moving combustible materials out of the work area.
• Placing fireproof materials over equipment that might ignite.

Also, ensure that a fire extinguisher is available at all times. If a fire does start, don't panic and call the local fire department immediately.

**Final Word**

While there are several hazards associated with welding, injuries don't need to happen. Use common sense and don't ignore the safety warnings around you. Know which hazards exist in your work area and use the tips from this Safety Talk to stay safe when welding.

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Safety wear doesn't have eyes. Be on the lookout for other guys.