# Fire vs Heat Workplace Risk Checklist

British Safety Council

*Practical prompts for distinguishing ignition/fire risks from heat exposure risks*

*Use before hot work, work near high-temperature processes, or work in hot environments. Supports, but does not replace, a suitable and sufficient riskassessment under the Managementof Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.`*

## 1. First, identify which risk is present

| 🔥 Fire hazard | 🌡️ Heat risk |
| --- | --- |
| Centres on ignition, combustion, fire spread and emergency response. | Centres on exposure to high temperatures, hot surfaces, hot environments and heat-related illness. |
| Common signs: sparks, naked flames, blowtorches, cutting, grinding, combustible materials nearby. | Common signs: hot machinery, ovens, furnaces, steam systems, radiant heat, outdoor heat, poor ventilation. |
| Typical controls: hot work permits, housekeeping, isolation, fire watch, extinguishers, detection and evacuation procedures. | Typical controls: ventilation, hydration, rest breaks, work pattern changes, acclimatisation, suitable PPE and worker monitoring. |

## 2. Quick decision prompts

*Ask these questions before starting any hot work or work in hot environments*

- ☐ Could this activity create sparks, flames, hot particles or another ignition source?
- ☐ Are combustible materials, flammable liquids, dusts, gases or waste present nearby?
- ☐ Could a fire spread beyond the immediate work area or affect other people?
- ☐ Could workers be exposed to high temperatures, radiant heat, hot surfaces or steam?
- ☐ Could heat cause dehydration, fatigue, reduced concentration or unsafe decision-making?
- ☐ Do fire and heat risks need to be assessed separately for the same task?

# 3. Control checklist

*Complete before work begins — assign an action owner for any gaps*



| Area | Check | Notes / action owner |
|---|---|---|
| Fire | ☐ Combustible materials removed, covered or isolated before work starts. | |
| Fire | ☐ Hot work permit considered or completed where required. | |
| Fire | ☐ Suitable extinguishers, alarms and emergency arrangements confirmed. | |
| Fire | ☐ Equipment inspected and maintained; ignition sources controlled. | |
| Fire | ☐ Fire watch or post-work inspection arranged where sparks or heat may remain. | |
| Heat | ☐ Ventilation, cooling or shade provided where possible. | |
| Heat | ☐ Drinking water available and workers encouraged to hydrate regularly. | |
| Heat | ☐ Rest breaks and work patterns adjusted for hot conditions or strenuous tasks. | |
| Heat | ☐ Workers briefed on heat stress symptoms and what to report. | |
| Heat | ☐ Suitable PPE selected without increasing heat stress unnecessarily. | |

# 4–7. Worker briefing, risk matrix & next steps

## 4. Worker briefing points

- ☐ Explain which hazards are fire risks, which are heat risks, and which are both.
- ☐ Show workers how to report unsafe heat, symptoms of heat stress, or uncontrolled ignition sources.
- ☐ Confirm emergency procedures for fire, burns, heat illness and first aid escalation.
- ☐ Remind supervisors to review controls when the task, weather, equipment or work area changes.

## 5. Mini risk matrix

| Situation | Main risk | What to check first | Priority |
|---|---|---|---|
| Welding, cutting or grinding | Fire + heat | Ignition sources, combustibles, hot surfaces, PPE | High |
| Commercial kitchen or bakery | Heat | Ventilation, hydration, hot surfaces, work patterns | Medium–High |
| Boiler room / plant room | Heat | Temperature, steam, isolation, lone working | Medium–High |
| Outdoor work in hot weather | Heat | Shade, water, rest breaks, acclimatisation | Medium |

## 6. Notes

## 7. Next steps

Need to strengthen fire or workplace temperature controls? Explore British Safety Council fire safety training and workplace temperature training — or use this checklist as a starting point for discussions with managers, supervisors and workers.

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