

INTRODUCTION

Many serious fires have occurred during the maintenance, repair and construction of buildings and machinery.

Global Insurer FM Global reports that in a study for the ten years (from) 1987 through 1996, contractors caused 236 fires and explosions while doing hot work at properties insured by FM Global.



In the same study, employees caused 165 fires. These statistics show that one should not assume a worker will automatically adhere to safe practices simply because they are contractors and 'do hot work all the time'.

In another FM Global study of 616 hot work losses, 539 losses were caused by cutting or welding torches, and next in order were plumbers' and painters' torches at 37 losses (Source FM Global Data Sheet 10-3).

PREVENTION

Hot work losses are 100 per cent preventable if organisations take the proper precautions by using a Hot Work Permit System. The key roles in the process are:

- **Issuer:** A responsible person needs to issue the permits in a manner that appropriately reviews the nature of the work being undertaken and the adequacy of the controls being implemented;
- **Worker:** The person conducting the work must have an understanding of the potential risks associated with hot work and must accept responsibility for conducting this work safely; and
- **Fire Watch:** The fire watch has a key role to be vigilant during the works and ensure that sparks do not inadvertently escape the work area and come in contact with combustible materials in adjacent areas.

As long as the participants understand their roles and the precautions detailed in the permit attached are followed then the risk associated with conducting hot work can be appropriately managed.