Fire

In homes, winter is fire season, but for schools, summer can greatly increase risk.

Rubbish!

In schools, one of the major fire hazards is different types of rubbish.

Dumpsters can be a problem because:

- an open lid means fires in them can spread;
- when lids are closed they can be nearly double the temperature inside as it is outside;
- a mix of combustible materials combined with excess heat can lead to explosive conditions.

Consider your garbage!

- Would you mix dangerous chemicals if they were in bottles? Then why would you mix them when they are on rags? Dispose of chemical soaked cloths carefully.
- If you have used turps to clean, don't place the cloth in a bin with combustible materials such as paper.
- Ensure dumpsters are not positioned close to other combustible areas.

Dust

Schools, especially the TAS and Arts areas, are full of dust - wood, paper, textiles. This dust floats in the air and settles behind cupboards, in cracks, even in ceiling spaces.

All of this non-dirt dust is highly flammable! Flaming dust also helps the fire to spread. Even swarf is a problem - metal overheats, lubricants add fuel, equals sparks.

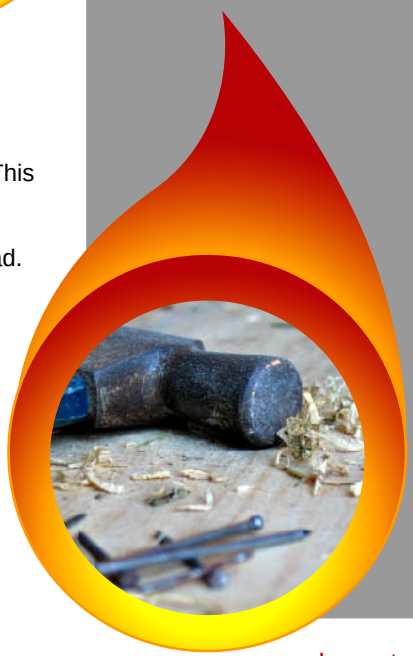
Another major concern with this dust is that much of it is toxic when alight, particularly treated pine. When this dust has been mixed with chemicals such as the various treatments, shellacs, etc, the toxic smoke will also react differently. Smoke from shellac rises but smoke from treated pine sinks.

- Schedule a thorough dust clean regularly to minimise build up
- Ensure emergency procedures consider the likely behaviour of toxic smoke
- When using tools which create sparks, ensure all dust and other combustibles have been moved from the entire area affected by sparks
- Ensure appropriate fire extinguishers are easily accessible and well-maintained, and that you know how to use them!

Did you Know?

The Tip Top Bakery fire at Fairfield in 2002 was caused by "ignition of polenta flour dust … a film of residue on the inside of the machinery and the exhaust ducting leading to the roof area … would have contributed to the … spread of fire."

Source:
Fire Australia, November 2002



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Chemicals

How are your chemicals and fertilizers stored?

What quantities do you have?

- Do not keep large quantities
- Ensure hazardous substances are stored according to the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for that product
- If the MSDS recommends storage below a certain temperature, monitor temperatures inside the storage area on hot days and find alternative, cooler storage if necessary.
- Ensure appropriate fire extinguishers are easily accessible and well-maintained

Did you Know?

Fertilizer and fuel oil was used in the Oklahoma bombing in 1995, which killed 168 people.

Brush

In summer, bush and undergrowth is a primary source of fuel for bushfires.

- Check your perimeters to ensure there is no risk from surrounding bush and liaise with local fire authorities if necessary.
- Ensure plant rubbish is disposed of and not 'stockpiled', particularly around buildings.

Need Help?

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