

Safe Cutting Torch protocol for an Auto Recycling Facility

Certified Auto Recyclers program advises limited use of gas cutting torches, restricted to trained employees. Safety protocols must be followed before using the torch. Both management and torch users should review the protocol and may need additional training based on local regulations or insurance requirements. Download the Cutting Torch Protocol at <https://aracertification.com/guidance>

Improper use of cutting torches can cause explosions, fires, burns, eye injuries, and even fatalities. Some insurers have increased deductibles for claims involving torch-related property damage. The policy aims to make cutting tools a last resort. When using a torch, follow proper guidelines to avoid death, serious injury, or significant property damage.

Safe cutting torch facts you need to know

Flame temperatures can exceed 6000°F. Misuse may cause immediate or delayed fires from smoldering debris or explosions. Inspect all equipment; damaged components can lead to injuries or fires. Properly regulate pressures to avoid explosions. Hidden dangers like compressed gas in shock absorbers or concealed fuel lines can ignite when cutting.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Safe Use

- Eliminate or limit torch use; modern tools can replace torches.
- Secure access to torches; allow only trained employees with supervisor approval to use them.
- Move the vehicle or part to a "clear zone" away from combustibles. Ensure gas tanks are removed and spills cleaned.
- Remove all flammables from the cutting area; sparks can travel up to 35 feet.
- Wear non-flammable gloves and clothing to protect against sparks and slag.
- Have a second employee observe and be on "FIRE WATCH" during and for 30 minutes after cutting.
- Do not cut at the end of the day; smoldering fires can develop when no one is present.
- Understand fire extinguisher types and have appropriate extinguishers accessible.
- Ensure proper ventilation to avoid oxygen depletion or enrichment.
- Keep oily or greasy substances away from oxygen equipment; they can ignite easily.
- Avoid blowing dirt off clothing with oxygen, as it can saturate fabric and ignite.
- Do not empty oxygen cylinders below 25-50 psig to prevent contamination.
- Never smoke near oxygen or fuel gases.
- Inspect equipment before each use; address any damage before operating.
- Release pressure adjusting screw before opening the cylinder valve slowly.
- Purge hose lines individually before lighting the torch with a proper flint device.

Follow these practices to ensure safe and effective torch operations.

OSHA (29CFR 1910.252(a) Fire Prevention and Protection Basic Precautions) and the NFPA (51B Standard for Fire Prevention During Welding, Cutting, and Other Hot Work) set requirements for cutting operations. They hold management and supervisors accountable for safe cutting practices, fire protection equipment, and hot work authorization.