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TIP OF THE MONTH - NOVEMBER 2026

UNCERTIFIED AND DAMAGED WELDING CURTAIN IN USE

NO PERMIT, NO SHIELD, NO FIRE WATCH – NO HOT WORK.



NOT ACCEPTABLE – short, soiled, torn, not flame-proof, no certificate



ACCEPTABLE – flame-proof curtain with certificate

- **RISQ 3.2 – 4.7 – Are procedures in place for the control of hot work, incorporated in the safety management system, with documented evidence of compliance?**
- **SIRE 2.0 – 5.5.2 – Were the Master, officers and ratings familiar with the company hot work procedure, and was hot work conducted in accordance with it?**
- **PSC Deficiency Codes 07110 – Fire-fighting equipment / 15150 – ISM**
- **IMO MSC/Circ.1084 – Principles for Hot Work on Board All Types of Ships**
- **ISGOTT Chapter 9.4 – Hot Work**

FINDING

During the hot work area inspection, the PAS Auditor found the welding and grinding curtain short, soiled with oil, torn at the seam and made of ordinary coated fabric with no flame-retardant certificate. The other curtain, made of red welding PVC, was flame-proof and certified, with a sign allowing welding and grinding only behind it. A damaged or non-flame-proof curtain cannot contain sparks and slag, and oil-soaked fabric can ignite.

ROOT CAUSE

Lack of preventive maintenance: the curtain was not inspected or replaced when it became torn, short and contaminated with oil, and it was not included in the Planned Maintenance System or the monthly checks of the hot work area.

Inadequate procurement and document control: a curtain was supplied and kept in use without a flame-retardant certificate, so its fire resistance could not be demonstrated and the certificate was not verified on receipt.

Insufficient supervision: shielding items on the permit checklist were ticked without confirming the curtain's size, condition and certification, and no responsible officer verified the work area in person.

IMPORTANCE

Hot work is a leading ignition source on board: a single spark or piece of slag can ignite oil residues, insulation or cargo vapours, and heat through a bulkhead can start a fire hours later. A curtain only protects if it is flame-proof, certified, undamaged and large enough. Missing controls are a negative SIRE 2.0 and RISQ observation, and an ISM and fire safety non-compliance at PSC.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Safety curtains and shields:** use only flame-proof curtains with a valid certificate kept on board, of sufficient height and width to cover the work area. Inspect them before each job for tears, gaps, oil contamination and burn marks, and replace damaged or uncertified curtains immediately.
- **Designated area:** carry out hot work in the designated workshop whenever possible, with the curtain erected, and protect crew, equipment, cables and piping from sparks, slag and heat. Elsewhere, permit it only with a written plan, Master or responsible officer approval, and management approval where the procedure requires it, supervised by an officer not involved in the work.
- **Permit, risk assessment and checklist:** hold a work planning meeting and complete a task-specific risk assessment and permit checklist. Fill in the permit on site, never in advance, and physically verify each item.
- **Atmosphere and area preparation:** test and record the atmosphere before and during the work, particularly on tankers. Remove or cover combustibles, clean up oil, isolate fire alarm detectors where the procedure permits, and check the other side of bulkheads and decks.
- **Fire watch and equipment:** post a competent fire watch with no other duties, with charged extinguishers or a fire hose at hand. Maintain the watch, including adjacent spaces, after the work ends for the period set in the company procedure.
- **PPE:** flame-resistant coveralls, welding helmet or face shield, gloves, safety footwear and, where required, hearing and respiratory protection for everyone involved.
- **Fleet follow-up:** add the curtains and shields to the Planned Maintenance System and circulate this case across the fleet, with superintendents checking curtains, certificates and permits during onboard visits.

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