



Garage Hazards

This article discusses common hazards identified during Comp Alliance loss control inspections for Highway and DPW garages. Look around your garage to spot these hazards and initiate mitigation efforts to resolve them swiftly.

Grinders

Bench and pedestal grinders need appropriate shielding to prevent debris from flying into the face or eyes of the operator. Grinder-mounted shields are good but tend to get worn or crack over time. This creates another hazard, as operators cannot see through the shield to observe the grinding material. Face shields can be worn in place of a grinder shield. Face shields should be provided near the grinder and a sign should be posted nearby to inform operators to use face protection. Additionally, grinders must be firmly secured to the bench or pedestal, and the tool rest should be held no more than 1/8 inch from the wheel.

Welding

Before welding, confirm the location is safe, remove any flammables and combustibles, prepare materials, and create a clean, clear space. Inspect the welding equipment to ensure it is adequate, and connections are secure. Inspect and wear proper personal protective equipment (PPE), and allow for adequate ventilation in the welding space. Sometimes a welding screen is necessary to prevent fire exposure to areas within the garage. Spare oxygen and acetylene tanks need to be secured in the upright position to keep them from tipping if they are struck, and they must be separated by at least 20 feet or by a fire-rated divider.

PPE

PPE must be available to all staff, and the equipment should meet the safety needs of specific job functions. Hand protection should be appropriate for vibration control, chemical protection, or general protection. Hearing protection consisting of disposable inserts and earmuffs, eye protection with a UV-protection rating for sunny days, and safety boots are PPE that should be utilized.

Chainsaw Use

Adequate PPE includes a hard hat with a face shield, earmuffs, safety glasses, leather gloves for gripping the saw and vibration control, boots, and chaps. Chaps are not one-size-fits-all, so at least two sizes should be provided. Before using a chainsaw, employees must complete training and review the process.

Housekeeping

Trip and fall injuries are commonly caused by poor housekeeping. Be sure to pick up debris, remove storage near walking surfaces, and keep stairs clear. Also, improve the lighting in the garage, especially near the maintenance areas, store spare parts and metals on racks or designated spaces, and repair uneven, cracked, or broken walking surfaces.

While this is not an all-encompassing list of hazards we find in garages, it includes the most frequent problems likely to contribute to workplace injuries when improperly controlled. For further information, please reach out to the Comp Alliance Director of Loss Control, Robert Blaisdell at rblaisdell@wrightinsurance.com