

REPORT #:
71-276-2026

REPORT DATE:
4/15/2026

INCIDENT DATE:
2/16/2025

WORKER:
33 years old

INDUSTRY:
Indoor Shooting Range

OCCUPATION:
Instructor

SCENE:
Range Classroom

EVENT TYPE:
Fire, Explosion



Angle grinder where fire started.

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INDOOR SHOOTING RANGE FATALITY NARRATIVE

Indoor Shooting Range Instructor Killed in Fire

SUMMARY

A 33-year-old instructor died in a fire at an indoor shooting range. He worked there for six years as an instructor and operated a gunsmithing and holster making side business at the range. The instructor was working in the second-floor classroom inside the range. He was using an angle grinder to modify a metal cart for his side business. It is unknown why he was working there and not in the workshop, which was designated for metal work.

He brought the grinder that day, and the owner believed the cart had been brought previously. The classroom contained flammable and combustible materials including ammunition, solvents, paper, and range sweep-off dust that contained unspent gunpowder.

Three coworkers and seven customers were in other areas of the range. One worker went to the classroom and saw the instructor cutting the cart with the grinder, with no visible smoke or fire, then returned to the lobby. About a minute later, ceiling tiles began to fall and fire erupted from above. He ran toward an exit door and was blown through it, suffering burns and a head injury.

At the same time, the two workers on the first floor heard rushing air followed by an explosion through the stairwell, possibly fueled by combustible dust above the ceiling.

Alarms sounded as the fire spread rapidly. The injured worker directed customers to the exit and reentered several times but could not reach the instructor.

The instructor was later found about 32 feet from the fire's origin. It is believed he was trying to reach the front exit where others were calling to him. He died from smoke inhalation and burn injuries.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Following the incident, investigators found:

- Fire investigators reported the fire started in the classroom as indicated by burn patterns. They concluded that the source of ignition was either sparks from grinding or an electrical short circuit. The grinder was found unplugged.
- The employer had an [accident prevention program](#) (APP) but it did not include safe use of angle grinders as they were not used by workers. The employer believed the instructor knew that he should do metal work or hot work only in the workshop.
- One-second floor exit door and stairway were closed due to break-ins.
- One worker described large accumulations of visible settled dust in the space above the ceiling tiles.

REQUIREMENTS

Employers must:

- Provide a workplace free of recognized hazards. See [WAC 296-800-11005](#)
- Follow the requirements in [NFPA 51B – Standard for Fire Prevention in Use of Cutting and Welding Processes](#) referenced in [WAC 296-24-680 Welding, cutting, and brazing](#). Washington Administrative Codes (WACs) do not contain grinder-specific language. Grinding is considered hot work by the NFPA.

RECOMMENDATIONS

FACE investigators concluded, that to help prevent similar occurrences, employers should:

- **Restrict hot work to designated areas.** Establish and enforce a [hot work program](#) restricting torch cutting, welding, brazing, and use of spark-producing tools to areas designated for hot work. Ensure work is [permitted](#) and monitored. Areas should be free of flammable and combustible materials and equipped with ventilation to effectively exhaust dust, gas, and fumes. Install dry chemical extinguishers specified for ordinary combustibles, flammable liquids/gases, and electrical fires ([Class ABC](#)). Develop and follow an accompanying training program.
- **Develop a range cleaning and waste disposal program.** Add a cleaning and waste storage and disposal program to your APP. Collect and dispose of settled dusts frequently and safely. Include a focus on storing flammable and combustible materials in a fire safe area and promptly disposing of them.
- **Maintain [exit routes](#) to permit prompt evacuation during an emergency.**

RESOURCES

[Guidance on Fire Safety](#) U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

[Model Fire Safety Plan](#) U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

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