Shooting Range Fire Prevention

As an owner of a shooting range, your business revenue depends upon customer use. A fire or fire damage could cause the necessary closure of your facility, resulting in the loss of income and potentially returning clientele. Fires can be devastating to life, property, and business vitality. However, by taking a pro-active approach to safety and implementing a few best practices, you can reduce the potential of devastating fires to your business.

Shooting ranges face unique fire risks, such as the use of inappropriate firearms or ammunition shot at the range, poor housekeeping, or improper maintenance of backstops. Preventing fires is up to both the owner and customer; both have a responsibility, and it is up to the owner to engage the customer in the process of fire prevention. Your risk management efforts should focus on firearms and ammunition and impact areas, some of the most common areas to experience fires. The following are several best practices for each.

Best Practices

Firearms and Ammunition. Ranges are designed to handle specific caliber firearms and ammunition and those that are not within the specifications should not be allowed. There are some simple ways to enforce this:

- Know the specifications for the types of firearms and ammunition your range was built for and develop, implement, and publicize safety policies on what is and is not allowed to be shot.
- Prohibit the use of tracer ammunition, as it is beyond the specifications of most ranges.
- Depending on your range specifications, restrict or prohibit use of full metal jacketed ammunition, high powered rifles or pistols, and fully automatic or rapid-fire weapons.
- Enhance range rules signage at the range entrance as well as on the walls of an indoor range to include:
- Clearly identifying the firearms and ammunition that are prohibited from range.
- Photos of unwanted ammunition with the universal red circle with the line through it.
- Indicating that range officers may ask customers to see the firearms and ammunition they intend to shoot.

Impact Areas: As many fires start at the impact area, safety efforts should be focused in this area to greatly reduce potential of a fire:

- Keep all impact areas free of debris.
- Put lead and brass in non-contaminated, metal containers separate from flammable/combustible trash and store it off or away from the range.
- Protect electrical outlets and fixtures from stray shots or ricochets. Low gauge bulletproof Plexiglas can be an inexpensive way to cover recessed lighting and fixtures.
- Use backstops made of range certified recycled rubber, reducing the chance of ricochets and frequency for cleaning. More traditional back stops should be cleaned daily to eliminate gunpowder residue.
- Keep range floors clean at all times.
- Wet mop indoor shooting area(s) regularly to reduce the buildup of dangerous residue.
- Remove any combustible debris.

- Clear any brush from around the impact area of an outdoor range to reduce fuel sources that could catch fire from heat of fired rounds.
- Maintain the appropriate size and number of fire extinguishers around the range.
- By implementing these risk management best practices at your range, you can help protect your customer base and reduce the potential for financial losses due to fire.