



Houston Fire Department Life Safety Bureau (LSB)



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Roofing Operations

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LSB Standards are established in accordance with provisions of the City of Houston *Fire Code*. They are subject to the administrative sections covering alternative materials and methods, modifications, and the Board of Appeals.

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Roofing Operations

Section 11.1 – General

11.1.1 Scope.

This standard applies to the application of roofing materials to a building or structure within the City of Houston involving the use of an asphalt kettle or torch.

11.1.2 Purpose.

This standard shall prescribe the minimum safeguards during the application of roofing materials.

11.1.3 Torches and Other Flame-Producing Devices.

The use of torches or other flame-producing devices for application of roofing membranes is prohibited.

Exception: When approved by the Fire Code Official in advance of the roofing operations, roofing operations shall be conducted in accordance with this standard.

Section 11.2 – Definitions

11.2.1 Barrel.

Forty-two (42) U.S. gallons.

11.2.2 Certificate of Training.

A certificate of training indicating the person in possession of the certificate has completed an approved course of instruction on the proper application of a torch applied modified bitumen roof system to a roof using a flame-producing device and the proper use of an infrared temperature scanner.

11.2.3 Container.

Any vessel, including cylinders, tanks, portable tanks and cargo tanks, used for transporting and storing LP-gas.

11.2.4 Course of Instruction.

The material used to certify personnel on the proper application of roofing material. For the purpose of this standard, approved course of study will be the Certified Roofing Torch Applicator program (CERTA), provided by the Midwest Roofing Contractors Association (MRCA).

11.2.5 Cylinder.

A portable container constructed to U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) cylinder specifications, or in some cases constructed of a similar size and for similar service in accordance with the ASME code. The maximum size permitted under DOT specifications is 1000-lb water capacity.

11.2.6 District of Limitations (DOL).

DOL No. 1 (Downtown – Central Business District)

Beginning at the intersection of U.S. Highway 59 with Pierce Street; thence northerly along U.S. Highway 59 to the centerline of Buffalo Bayou; thence, westerly following the meanders of the center line Buffalo Bayou to Franklin Street; thence, westerly along Franklin Street to Interstate Highway 45; thence, southerly along Interstate Highway 45 to Pierce Street; thence, easterly along Pierce Street to U.S. Highway 59, the place of beginning.

DOL No. 2 (The Texas Medical Center)

Beginning at the intersection of Main Street with Cambridge Street; thence, southerly along Main Street to Holcombe Boulevard; thence, easterly along Holcombe Boulevard to Braeswood Boulevard; thence, northerly along Braeswood Boulevard to North MacGregor Drive; thence, northerly along North MacGregor Drive to Cambridge Street; thence, westerly along Cambridge Street to Main Street, the place of beginning.

(DOL, for the purpose of this standard, and in accordance with the *Fire Code*, restrict the use and storage of LP-gas in DOL No.1 and DOL No. 2.)

11.2.7 Excess Flow Valve (Also Called Excess-Flow Check Valve).

A device designed to close when the liquid or vapor passing through it exceeds a prescribed flow rate as determined by pressure drop.

11.2.8 High-Rise Building.

A building with floors located more than 75 feet (22,860 mm) above the lowest level of fire department vehicle access.

Exception. For the purpose of establishing a building as a high-rise, the uppermost floor located more than 75 feet above the lowest level of fire department access and used for housing building systems mechanical equipment is exempt from the 75 feet measurement.

11.2.9 Roofing Operations.

Operations including, but not limited to, torch applied roofing, a roofing kettle, or any other similar situation.

11.2.10 Listed.

Equipment or materials included in a list published by an organization acceptable to the Fire Code Official.

11.2.11 LP-Gas.

Liquified petroleum gas.

11.2.12 Protected Structure.

For the purpose of this standard, “Protected Structures” are structures equipped with automatic sprinklers or Class I, II, or III wet standpipe systems for fire department use.

11.2.13 Roofing Kettle.

Any container used for pre-heating tar, asphalt pitch, or similar substances for waterproofing.

11.2.14 Torch Applied Roof Systems.

Bituminous roofing systems using membranes that are adhered by heating with a torch and melting asphalt back coating instead of the application of hot asphalt for adhesion.

11.2.15 Standby Personnel.

One or more Fire Inspectors who are current members of the Life Safety Bureau of the Houston Fire Department who, in the interest of public safety and due to the nature of an operation, activity or event, may be required to be on standby duty at a site while such an operation or activity is conducted when required by the Fire Code Official. See Section 11.5.5 of this standard for Permit Office contact information concerning standby personnel.

11.2.16 Water Capacity.

The amount of water at 60 degrees (F) required to fill a container.

Section 11.3 – Torch Applied Roofing

11.3.1 Regulations.

Torch applied roofing shall be regulated in accordance with the City of Houston *Code of Ordinances* and the *Fire Code*.

11.3.1.1 Permit Required.

No person shall use or cause, or allow the use of, any ignited torch, kettle, open flame, or other flame-producing device for the purpose of constructing or repairing any roof of any building or structure unless work is performed pursuant to a valid permit issued by the Fire Code Official for the use of such device. See Section 11.5.5 of this standard for Permit Office contact information concerning permits.

11.3.1.2 Certificate of Training Required.

No person shall use any ignited torch, open flame, or other flame-producing device for the purpose of constructing or repairing any roof of any building or structure unless that person holds a certificate of training in the use of flame-producing devices or is working under the direct supervision of a certified person who is present on the roof at all times while the work is being performed including the monitoring period required under Section 11.3.1.7 of this standard.

11.3.1.3 Course of Instruction.

To obtain a certification of training in the use of flame-producing devices, a person shall complete a course of instruction on the proper application of torch applied modified bitumen roof system to a roof using a flame-producing device and the proper use of an infrared temperature scanner. The instruction must be obtained from a roofing industry educational institute. The course of instruction and the

institute shall be approved by the Fire Code Official. Each certificate of training shall be valid for three (3) years and shall reflect the certified person's name, driver's license or personal identification number, and the expiration date of the certificate of training.

11.3.1.4 Roof Construction or Repair Permit Requirements.

Roof construction or repair costing less than \$2,000 on any one building that involves the use of a flame-producing device may be performed under an Annual Repair Permit. A Site-Specific Permit shall be required for each other use of a flame-producing device to construct or repair a roof costing \$2,000 or more. This Site-Specific Permit shall be valid for the period of time the applicant has shown necessary to complete the work, but not for more than one year. Site-Specific Permits shall be valid only for the buildings upon a specific tract or parcel of property, which shall be identified on the permit.

11.3.1.5 Safety Regulations.

All roofing operations shall conform to the manufacturer's safety regulations for the roofing material's proper safe installation.

11.3.1.6 LP-Gas Cylinders in Use.

LP-gas containers, or containers of other approved fuels used for flame-producing devices in roof operations, shall be shielded from the direct rays of the sun and from temperatures above 120 degrees Fahrenheit (49 degrees Centigrade). Such containers shall be used only in well-ventilated areas and shall not be allowed to remain on the roof or other areas being constructed or repaired at the end of each day's work.

All LP-gas containers used for roofing or similar operations shall be secured while being moved in a method approved by the Fire Code Official, and such containers and their use must conform to the safety regulations prescribed in NFPA Standard 58. All containers shall be positioned so that the pressure relief device is within the vapor space of the container at all times.

11.3.1.7 Monitoring.

Any roof being repaired by the use of a flame-producing device shall be monitored by a certified person or by competent personnel working under his/her direct supervision. Monitoring shall continue until all elevated temperatures return to ambient temperature as determined by the use of an approved infrared temperature scanner device. This monitoring period shall not be less than 30 minutes. Any area of heat concentration that indicates a continuous temperature rise shall be investigated for possible smoldering materials and necessary actions taken to prevent the ignition of such material.

11.3.1.8 Fire Extinguishers.

There shall be at least two listed portable fire extinguishers of a minimum rating of 3-A, 40-B:C classification on each roof under construction or repair. Both fire extinguishers shall be on the roof in close proximity to the roofing operation and

be readily accessible. All fire extinguishers shall have current service tags from a licensed fire extinguisher service company.

11.3.2 Equipment.

11.3.2.1 Approved Type.

All equipment such as handheld torches and torch trolleys shall be of an approved type. No torch trolleys will be allowed on the roof of any building without written approval from the Fire Code Official's office.

11.3.2.2 HandHeld Torches.

All handheld torches shall be equipped with a pilot adjustment, flame height adjustment, and a minimum of 25 feet to a maximum of 50 feet of listed hose, gauge, and regulator. Handheld torches shall be equipped with properly installed torch stands or brackets. A spark lighter shall be used to ignite torches.

11.3.2.3 Safety Valves.

Torch trolleys and multiple torches shall be equipped with listed safety valves.

11.3.2.4 Number of Torch Devices.

The number of torch devices in use on the roof of a building shall be limited to a maximum of 5 unless more are approved in writing by the Fire Code Official.

11.3.2.5 Number and Quantity of LP-Gas.

The number and quantity of LP-gas containers allowed on the roof of a building shall be limited to the following, unless approved in writing by the Fire Code Official:

The maximum number of LP-gas containers on the roof of a building within DOL No. 1 and No. 2 shall be limited to 5 with the largest container not exceeding 72-lb water capacity (30-lb LP-gas capacity) provided all containers are connected to an approved device and in use.

The maximum number of LP-gas containers on the roof of a building outside DOL No. 1 and No. 2 shall be limited to 5 with the largest container not exceeding 120-lb water capacity (60-lb LP-gas capacity). One container not to exceed 240-lb water capacity (100-lb LP-gas capacity) may be used only when using a "Torch Trolley".

11.3.3 Transportation of LP-Gas.

Transportation of LP-gas within and on the roof of a building shall be in accordance with this section and NFPA Standard 58. All containers shall be positioned so that the pressure relief device is within the vapor space of the container at all times.

11.3.3.1 Transportation of Containers Within a Building.

Movement of containers having a water capacity greater than 2½-lb (nominal one-lb LP-gas capacity) within a building shall be restricted to movement directly associated with the roofing operation.

Valve outlets on containers shall be tightly plugged.

Only emergency stairs not generally used by the public shall be used, and reasonable precautions shall be taken to prevent the container from falling down the stairs.

Freight or passenger elevators may be used when occupied only by those engaged in moving the container.

11.3.3.2 Buildings Under Construction or Undergoing Major Renovation.

When buildings are under construction or undergoing major renovation and are not occupied by the public or are only partially occupied by the public, containers may be transported in the unoccupied portions with the prior approval of the Fire Code Official.

11.3.3.3 Renovation in Buildings Frequented by the Public.

During the hours of the day when the public normally is in the building, the following shall apply:

The maximum water capacity of individual containers shall be 72-lb (30-lb LP-gas capacity) and the number of containers shall not exceed the number of workers assigned to using the LP-gas heating devices.

Containers having a water capacity greater than 2½-lb (one-lb LP-gas capacity) shall not be left unattended.

During the hours of the day when the building is not open to the public, containers may be transported in the building for repair or minor renovation.

11.3.4 LP-Gas Containers on the Roof of a Building.

11.3.4.1 Container's Location.

Containers on the roof of a building shall be located in areas where there is free air circulation, at least 10 feet from building openings (such as windows and doors), and at least 20 feet from air intakes of air conditioning and ventilating systems. All containers shall be positioned so that the pressure relief device is within the vapor space of the container at all times.

11.3.4.2 Parapets.

Containers shall not be located on roofs entirely enclosed by parapets that are more than 18 inches high, unless all the following apply:

The parapets are breached with low level ventilation openings no more than 20 feet apart or

All openings connected with the interior of the building are at or above the level of the top of the parapets.

There is an approved standby person on duty, in accordance with Section 11.2.15 of this standard, while the LP-gas container is on the roof.

Section 11.4 – Asphalt Roofing Kettles

11.4.1 Construction of Roofing Kettles.

11.4.1.1 Materials and Methods.

This section describes the materials and methods of construction of roofing kettles that shall be acceptable to the Fire Code Official. This section shall apply to all roofing kettles or tar pots. The following are minimum requirements:

No roofing kettle shall have a capacity in excess of 5 barrels.

Roofing kettles 2-barrel capacity or less shall be constructed of sheet steel having a thickness of not less than 0.105 inch (No. 12 Manufacturers' Standard Gage) and kettles of more than 2-barrel capacity shall be constructed of sheet steel having a thickness of not less than 0.135 inch (No. 10 Manufacturers' Standard Gage).

All supports, corners, and the top and bottom of the fire box shall be bound with angle iron or other reinforcements approved by the Fire Code Official. All doors shall be hinged, closely fitted, and adequately latched. Fireboxes shall be of sufficient height from the ground or provided with a system of shields or insulation to prevent heat damage to any surface beneath the firebox.

Lids that can be gravity operated shall be provided on all roofing kettles. The tops and covers of all kettles shall be constructed of sheet steel having a thickness of not less than 0.075 inch (No. 14 Manufacturers' Standard Gage), close fitting and attached to the kettle with hinges in a manner allowing for gravity closing of the lid.

The chassis of the roofing kettle shall be substantially constructed and capable of carrying the load imposed upon it whether standing still or being transported.

Fuel containers, burners, and related appurtenances of roofing kettles in which LP-gas is used for heating shall comply with all the requirements of NFPA Standard 58.

Fuel containers that operate under air pressure shall not exceed 20 gallons capacity and shall be subject to the approval of the Fire Code Official.

All fuel containers shall be maintained at separation distances in accordance with the applicable NFPA standards, or at least 10 feet from the burner flame, or at least 2 feet from heat or flame when properly insulated.

11.4.1.2 Use of Roofing Kettles.

Asphalt kettles shall not be used inside of a building or on the roof of a building except when approved by the Fire Code Official. For permits see the *Fire Code* and Section 11.5 of this standard.

11.4.1.3 Location.

Asphalt kettles shall not be located within 20 feet of any combustible materials, combustible building surfaces, or building openings such as windows, fresh air vents or intakes, doors, or other wall penetrations.

11.4.2 Asphalt Kettles on the Roof of a Building.

11.4.2.1 Secondary Containment.

Secondary containment shall be provided for an asphalt kettle on the roof of a building. The secondary containment shall consist of a liquid tight pan capable of containing the volumetric capacity of the kettle being protected. The pan shall be constructed of sheet steel having a thickness of not less than 0.105 inch (No. 12 Manufactures' Standard Gage).

11.4.2.2 Spare LP-Gas Containers.

Spare LP-gas containers shall not be stored on the roof of a building where an asphalt kettle is in operation, in accordance with Section 11.4.1.1 above, unless approved by the Fire Code Official in writing.

11.4.2.3 Attendant.

A trained attendant shall at all times be within 100 feet of a kettle when the heat source is operating. Ladders and similar obstacles shall not form a part of the route between the attendant and the kettle.

11.4.2.4 Fuel Containers.

Portable fuel containers shall not exceed 240-lb water capacity (100-lb LP-gas capacity) and shall be adequately secured in an upright position. LP-gas connected for use shall be kept a minimum of 15 feet from kettles. LP-gas containers not connected for use shall be kept a minimum of 25 feet from kettles. All containers shall be positioned so that the pressure relief device is within the vapor space of the container at all times.

Section 11.5 – Permits Required

11.5.1 Torch Applied Roofing.

11.5.1.1 Site Specific Permit.

Site-Specific Permits are for one location or address with jobs over \$2,000 value. Permit duration is 90 days, but may be extended as needed for up to one year maximum.

11.5.1.2 Annual Repair Permit.

Annual Repair Permits shall be issued for a specific address and shall only apply to repairs of an aggregate value less than \$2,000 in the 12-month period from the date of application. Duration of each permit is for one (1) year.

11.5.2 Asphalt Kettle on the Roof of a Structure Permit.

Asphalt Kettle on the Roof of a Structure Permits are issued for a single location where needed. Permit duration is 90 days, but may be extended as needed for up to one year maximum.

11.5.3 LP-Gas Storage/Use Permit.

LP-Gas Storage/Use Permits are issued for the storage of LP-gas is 125 gallons water capacity or more, aggregate amount. Permit duration is 90 days, but may be extended as needed for up to one year maximum.

11.5.4 Standby Personnel.

Standby personnel shall be required for roofing operations conducted on the roof of a building classified as a high-rise building, and any other building containing parapets as described in Section 11.3.4.2 of this standard, or as deemed necessary by the Fire Code Official.

11.5.5 Roofing Operations Permits.

A Roofing Operations Permit is required for torch applied roofing and/or asphalt kettle on the roof.

If standby personnel are required **in addition to** the Roofing Operations Permit, applications for both shall be made at the Houston Permitting Center.

Permit Office contact information is as follows:

The Houston Permitting Center

1002 Washington Avenue

Houston, Texas 77002

Hours of operation: 8:00am to 3:30pm (CST)

Monday through Friday

Office phone: (832) 394-8811

To E-mail Customer Service Questions: hfd.permitoffice@houstontx.gov

Link to City Wide Fee Schedule: www.houstoncityfees.org

Appendix A – Roofing Operations Checklist (Torches)

Roofing Operations Checklist for Standby Inspectors for Torch Applied Roofing:

A person certified in “Torch-Down Roofing” shall be in attendance when an open flame (torch) is in operation. The training and certification shall be through the “Midwest Roofing Contractors Association” (MRCA). A certification expires 3 years from the date of issuance, and then it must be renewed. (The certification card must not be more than three (3) years old.)

An infrared temperature scanner shall be on the roof during the roofing operation.

There shall be at least two approved portable fire extinguishers with a minimum rating of 3-A, 40-B:C available for use during any roofing operations.

There shall be a maximum 5 torches in use on the roof, unless approved in writing.

Maximum cylinder size for handheld torches shall not exceed 30-lb capacity. Torch trolleys may be equipped with cylinders not to exceed 100-lb gas capacity.

Torches shall have properly installed stands or brackets that will keep the flame pointed up when the torch is set down.

The standby inspector shall check LP-gas hoses for excessive wear or damage. (Excessive accumulation of tar on the hose could indicate problems.)

At the end of the day or cessation of torch operation, there shall be a monitoring period of not less than 30 minutes. During this time the infrared temperature scanner shall be used to determine any areas with temperatures in excess of ambient. Any area indicating a continuous rise in temperature shall be investigated for possible smoldering materials.

At the end of each day or cessation of torch operation, the LP-gas cylinder hoses shall be disconnected and the cylinder opening plugged, and the cylinders shall be removed from the roof or other areas being constructed or repaired at the end of each day’s work.

Appendix B – Roofing Operations Checklist (Asphalt Kettles)

Roofing Operations Checklist for Standby Inspectors for Asphalt Kettles on a Roof:

The kettle shall have a secondary containment pan.

LP-gas fuel cylinder(s) shall comply with Section 11.3.2.5 of this standard and shall not exceed 100-lb gas capacity. Only one 100-lb cylinder per kettle unless approved in advance by the Fire Code Official in writing. Fuel containers shall be secured to prevent from falling over.

The kettle shall be attended when the heat source is operating.

Two approved portable fire extinguishers with a minimum rating of 3-A, 40-B:C shall be on hand during the roofing operation.

The kettle shall be kept at least 20 feet from any building opening or combustible materials.

References

1. City of Houston *Fire Code*
2. City of Houston *Code of Ordinances*
3. National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 58, “Storage and Handling of Liquefied Petroleum Gases”

All reference materials used under this Life Safety Bureau standard shall be in accordance with the most current adopted City of Houston *Construction Code*.