



SAFETY ALERT

FILLING FUEL CONTAINERS

September 2009

This safety alert was published following a number of serious incidents that involved filling portable containers with petrol and the fumes catching alight.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Portable fuel containers, such as jerry cans, catching fire when being filled with petrol.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Vapours from flammable liquids, such as petrol, can be easily ignited by static electricity. If a container is held off the ground while filling occurs, or kept in the boot or tray of a vehicle while filling occurs, a static charge can build up, causing a spark and igniting the fuel. Fuel vapour can also be ignited by vehicle electrics.

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

When filling a portable fuel container:

- follow the directions of the service station attendant and all warning signs, and use an earthing strap if available
- put it on the ground when filling, away from all possible ignition sources
- don't leave it inside the vehicle or on a trailer when being filled
- ensure that it is suitable for holding flammable liquids – it should have markings that indicate it has been manufactured to AS/NZS 2906 *Fuel containers – Portable – Plastics and metal* standards, or an equivalent (drink bottles and plastic five-litre oil containers are not safe)
- keep one hand on the container while filling, to reduce the likelihood of static electricity build up and discharge
- ensure the container cap is replaced tightly before lifting the container into the vehicle
- ensure that it is upright, secured and away from any heat source (eg the sun) when it is being transported.

IF THERE IS A FIRE

- Don't move the container
- Alert the service station attendant
- Use a fire blanket or fire extinguisher (if safe to do so) – don't use water
- Stop, drop and roll, if your clothes catch fire.

making a difference

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY OBLIGATIONS

Clause 174Z of the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2001* requires the occupier of premises to ensure that any risk associated with the transfer of dangerous goods within, to or from the occupier's premises is eliminated or, if that is not reasonably practicable, controlled, having regard to the need for measures to:

- control spills and leaks
- minimise static electricity.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information, refer to:

- *AS/NZS 2906 Fuel containers – Portable – Plastics and metal*
- *AS1940 Storage and handling of flammable and combustible liquids*
- *Code of practice for the storage and handling of dangerous goods.*

Or phone **13 10 50** or visit www.workcover.nsw.gov.au

Disclaimer

This publication may contain occupational health and safety and workers compensation information. It may include some of your obligations under the various legislations that WorkCover NSW administers. To ensure you comply with your legal obligations you must refer to the appropriate legislation.

Information on the latest laws can be checked by visiting the NSW legislation website (www.legislation.nsw.gov.au) or by contacting the free hotline service on 02 9321 3333.

This publication does not represent a comprehensive statement of the law as it applies to particular problems or to individuals or as a substitute for legal advice. You should seek independent legal advice if you need assistance on the application of the law to your situation.

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