



You can't run fast enough

Pay attention to jobsite flammable, combustible fluid handling

The demonstration: Testers ignited one gallon of gasoline inside a car trunk. The resulting explosion blasted the trunk lid 80 feet in the air, making it apparent that anyone in the car would have been killed.

The bottom line: Since you can't move fast enough to get away from a flammable or combustible liquid explosion, always do what's necessary to avoid one.

These types of liquids are common on construction projects. Any person handling these liquids cannot afford to ignore or underestimate the dangers – remember that just 10 ounces of gasoline contains as much explosive force as a stick of dynamite.

There is a difference between combustible and flammable: A combustible liquid, such as fuel oil, kerosene, linseed oil, etc., must exceed 100 degrees Fahrenheit in order to ignite. A flammable liquid – gasoline, lacquer thinner, alcohol, paint thinners, etc. – are much more dangerous and can ignite below 100 degrees.

Make sure you read the warning label on these liquids. In addition to the danger of fire and



Illustration by Don Lomax

explosion, there may be other serious health threats.

Approved safety containers are required for storing these liquids in quantities greater than one gallon. Never store these liquids in glass bottles or in any other type of unapproved container. Approved containers must be made of metal, have a spring-loaded, pressure release cap, be self closing and equipped with a spark arrester.

Other cautions include:

- Never refuel engines that are running or hot.
- Never misuse a fuel, such as gasoline, for cleaning purposes.
- Never smoke near any fueling or storage areas.
- Never store extra gasoline containers in your trunk.
- Never improperly store or use these liquids inside buildings.

Pay attention to these storage tips:

OSHA limits indoor storage of flammable and combustible liquids to 25 gallons. The exception is approved storage cabinets, where 60 gallons of flammable or 120 gallons of combustible liquid is allowed. Never store these liquids in stairways, passageways or exits, or in near a boiler, electrical panel or air conditioning equipment.

Outside, portable, above-ground storage tanks should be located no closer than 20 feet from any building. The ground underneath the tanks must be protected from spills. In addition, tanks should be grounded to prevent static sparks. Post “Danger – No Smoking” signs around the area and mount a minimum 10B rated fire extinguisher within 50 feet of flammable storage locations.

Protect against static electricity buildup when dispensing these liquids from drums into metal containers. Ground all drums, and during filling, clip a wire between the drum and the container being filled.

Oil, grease and solvent-soaked rags should be kept in a self closing container. Change or dispose of these cleaning rags frequently. **EW**

Information for this Safety Watch was gathered from several tool box safety talks produced by the Associated General Contractors of America. It is meant for general information only;

to order AGC's "Construction Tool Box Safety Talks" loose-leaf binder, go to www.agc.org.

Sponsored by:

