Don’t Let Your Safety Go Up in Flames



What’s at Stake?

Flammable and combustible materials, such as gasoline, solvents, and paints, pose real danger to persons and property because they ignite easily and burn rapidly. Keep in mind, it is the vapors from these materials, not the liquids themselves, that ignite and burn. These vapors often can’t be seen or detected by smell.

What’s the Danger?

When an injury is caused from the impact of being hit by something it is considered a struck-by incident. When an injury happens from being pulled into or crushed between two or more objects it is considered a caught-between incident.

- Flammable liquids and gases can ignite at temperatures under 100 °F or 37.8 °C—a temperature close to room temperature and easily reachable on most days during the summer.
- Combustible liquids at temperatures above 100 °F or 37.8 °C, can release enough vapor to form burnable mixtures with air.
- Spray mists of flammable and combustible liquids in air can burn at any temperature if there is an ignition source

How to Protect Yourself

Understanding what you’re working with and how to prevent ignition is key to working safely with flammables and combustibles.

Safe Use

- Read the container label and the safety data sheet (SDS) for each flammable and combustible substance you work with.
- Avoid ignition sources such as open flames, smoking materials, hot surfaces, sparks and static electricity. Don’t smoke near flammable and combustible liquids.
- Wear the right personal protective equipment (PPE) and use the right ventilation systems.
- Use grounding and bonding wires to prevent static electricity buildup.
- Know the location of the fire extinguishing equipment and the spill control station before you begin work. Familiarize yourself with the equipment and how to use it.

Safe Storage

Store flammable and combustibles separately in a temperature-controlled area that is well-ventilated and away from sources of heat and electricity.

Use a special storage room or an approved safety container with vapor-tight caps and flame arrestors.

Examine containers periodically to ensure labels are on and readable and containers are in good condition—no rust, holes, damage or leaks.

Safe Disposal

- Read the SDS to learn the safest way to dispose of flammables and combustibles.
- Never pour either into the drain, sewer, garbage or ground.
- Dispose of clothing and other materials that have been contaminated according to company policy.

Final Word

Don’t let your safety go up in flames. Know the hazards of flammables and combustibles you work with and how to use, transport, and store them safely.