

Know the facts

Remember the old story about the guy who couldn't see if the gas tank was empty? He lit a match so he could see better – and you can figure out the rest. This same kind of careless thinking results in many gasoline-related accidents every year.

There's not much difference between a Molotov cocktail and a harmless, two-gallon container of gas. While one may be specifically designed to create mayhem, the other can easily become just as lethal. Smoking, carelessly using matches, or improper handling can quickly turn that container of gasoline into a raging wildfire.

Perhaps these examples make you think of a time in the past when you've used gasoline unsafely, too. Perhaps you've tried to use gasoline to light a fire in the fireplace, have refueled your lawn mower before it has properly cooled, or you've left gas soaked cleaning rags on your garage floor.

Oddly, it isn't the gasoline itself that burns – it's the gasoline vapors that burn. Since they are heavier than air, gasoline vapors can collect in low-lying areas and they're easily ignitable. Keep areas such as basements, garages, pits, or sumps well ventilated when gasoline is in use.

Gasoline Storage

Always keep gasoline in a well marked, approved safety container. Store gasoline and other properly identified flammables together. Never combine flammables in one container or pour them into an improper container such as a soft drink bottle or other food container.

Sources of Ignition

Accidental ignition of gasoline is easy. Some likely sources of ignition are:

- open flames or lights
- extremely heated surfaces
- sparks which result from metal-to-metal contact
- electrical equipment operation
- static electricity discharge
- tiny arcs from a cell phone or hand-held radio
- smoking cigarettes
- matches

Effects of Exposure

Always ensure that the area where gasoline is being used is well ventilated because the fumes are toxic.

Inhalation of fumes can result in:

- a pounding headache
- irritation of mucus membranes
- dizziness
- nausea

Prolonged exposure can cause:

- slurred speech
- hallucinations
- death

Things to remember when using gasoline

Always

- Allow engines to cool prior to refueling
- Use a funnel to help avoid spills

Never

- Smoke
- Use near open flames or any possible spark source
- Use gasoline as a cleaning solvent

Gas Spills

In the event of a gas spill, quickly wipe it up and properly dispose of the cloth, paper, or other gasoline-soaked waste product in an approved metal disposal container. At your job site, never keep more gasoline with you than you will use during that particular work shift.

It's part of everyday life

Gasoline is integral to our society and our work place. It is critical for operating automobiles, machines, boats, lawn mowers, and many other everyday items. Be cautious when using gasoline and carefully follow the safety rules so that gasoline works for you, not against you.

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