

# Gasoline Safety

The following consumer advisory and safety guidelines are provided to help consumers avoid potential problems with refueling, storage and disposal of gasoline. This information was obtained from the American Petroleum Institute (API) web site. Please visit [www.api.org](http://www.api.org) for additional consumer guidelines on gasoline safety.

## Refueling Advisory

The API is aware of a few unusual fire incidents involving self-service customers who were refueling their vehicles in cool or cold, dry weather conditions. These incidents may be related to static electricity build-up and discharge.

One of many possible causes of static electricity build-up is reentering your vehicle during refueling, particularly in cool or cold and dry climate conditions. This can cause a buildup of static electricity similar to shuffling your feet on carpet when the air in your home is dry. If you return from your vehicle interior to remove the filling nozzle without discharging the static buildup, in rare circumstances, a brief flash fire could occur at the filling point if the static discharges and resulting spark ignites gasoline vapors around the fill spout.

## Safety guidelines on vehicle refueling:

- **Always** turn your vehicle engine off while refueling.
- **Never** smoke, light matches or use lighters while refueling.
- Do not get back into your vehicle during refueling -- even when using the nozzle's automatic hold-open latch. If you must reenter your vehicle, discharge the static electricity buildup when you get out by touching the outside metal portion of your vehicle, away from the filling point, before attempting to remove the nozzle.
- To avoid gasoline spills, do not over fill or top off your vehicle fuel tank. The fuel dispenser will shut off automatically when the tank is full.
- Use only the hold-open latch provided on the gasoline pump. **Never** jam or force the hold-open latch open by using some other object such as the gas cap.
- When dispensing gasoline into a portable gasoline can, use only an approved container. Always place the container on the ground and keep the pump nozzle in contact with the container when refueling to avoid a static electricity ignition of fuel vapors. Containers should **never** be filled inside a vehicle, in the trunk, on the bed of a pickup truck, a flat bed or on the floor of a trailer.

**If a flash fire occurs during refueling**, the consumer should leave the nozzle in the vehicle fill pipe and back away from the vehicle. Notify the station attendant at once so that all dispensing devices and pumps can be shut off with emergency controls. If the facility is unattended, use the emergency intercom to summon help and the emergency shutdown button to shut off the pump.

## Safety guidelines on filling containers:

- Keep gasoline away from ignition sources like heat, sparks, and flames.
- Do not smoke.
- Shut off the vehicle's engine. Disable or turn off any auxiliary sources of ignition such as a camper or trailer heater, cooking units, or pilot lights.
- Only store gasoline in containers with approved labels as required by federal or state authorities. Never store gasoline in glass or unapproved containers.
- Portable containers must be placed **on the ground**, and the nozzle must stay in contact with the container when filling, to prevent buildup and discharge of static electricity. Do not fill a container in or on a vehicle, including in car trunks or truck beds.

- Fill the container at a slow rate. This will decrease the chance of static ignition buildup and minimize incidents of spillage or splattering.
- Manually control the nozzle valve throughout the filling process.
- Keep your face away from the nozzle or container opening.
- Avoid prolonged breathing of gasoline vapors.
- Never siphon gasoline by mouth. Do not put gasoline in your mouth—gasoline can be harmful or fatal if swallowed. If someone swallows gasoline, do not induce vomiting. Contact a doctor immediately.
- Keep gasoline away from your eyes and skin, because it may cause irritation.
- Use gasoline only in open areas that get plenty of fresh air.
- Never use gasoline to wash your hands.
- Remove gasoline-soaked clothing immediately.
- Fill container no more than 95 percent full to allow for expansion.
- Place cap tightly on the container after filling do not use containers that do not seal properly.
- If gasoline spills on the container, make sure that it has evaporated before placing container in your vehicle.
- Report spills to the attendant.
- Use gasoline as a motor fuel only.

When transporting gasoline in a portable container make sure the container is secure from tipping and sliding, and never leave in the direct sunlight or in the trunk of a car.

### **Storage:**

Store gasoline in an approved container or tank. Gasoline is a flammable liquid and should be stored at room temperature, away from potential heat sources such as the sun, hot water heater, space heater or a furnace, and away from ignition sources. Gasoline vapors are heavier than air and can travel along the floor to ignition source.

### **Gasoline disposal:**

*Never* dispose of gasoline by pouring it onto the ground or into a sewer, street drain, stream or other waterbody, or putting it into the trash. These actions are environmentally harmful and may result in a fire, explosion, or soil, surface or groundwater contamination. Fines and criminal penalties may be associated with improper disposal.

Excess gasoline in good condition can be added to the fuel tank of a gasoline-powered car or truck. See manufacturer's recommendations. (Don't dispose of gasoline/oil mixtures for two-stroke cycle engines this way.) However, it is not easy to dispose of gasoline that has deteriorated.

### **In Maryland:**

Most Maryland counties have programs in place to collect household hazardous materials such as gasoline. For information on the household hazardous materials collection program in your area, contact the Maryland Department of the Environment, <http://www.mde.state.md.us> under "Reference Information" or call the Hazardous Waste Program, 410-537-3345.

Proper disposal of gasoline reduces your risk to benzene exposure and protects Maryland's soil and water.



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