



## **PORTABLE GAS CAN**

### **FIRE HAZARDS**

#### **Description of the HAZARD:**

In recent incidents reported to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), fires spontaneously ignited when workers or others attempted to fill portable gasoline containers (gas cans) in the backs of pickup trucks equipped with plastic bed liners or in cars with carpeted surfaces. Serious skin burns and other injuries resulted. Similar incidents in the last few years have resulted in warning bulletins from several private and governmental organizations.

These fires result from the buildup of static electricity. The insulating effect of the bed liner or carpet prevents the static charge generated by gasoline flowing into the container or other sources from grounding. The discharge of this buildup to the grounded gasoline dispenser nozzle may cause a spark and ignite the gasoline. Both ungrounded metal (most hazardous) and plastic containers have been involved in these incidents.

Nearly every municipality has a pickup truck which is routinely used for general purposes, in public works, or in other departments. It is not unusual for workers to use and carry portable gasoline containers to fill their commonly used gasoline-powered equipment. String trimmers, mowers, and small gasoline-powered generators or pumps are those generally in use.

#### **Recommendations for Prevention:**

- Avoid the hazardous practice of leaving portable gasoline containers in pickup trucks or cars while refueling!
- Before filling, always remove the containers from the vehicle and place them on the ground at a safe distance from the vehicle. This provides a path to dissipate static charge to ground.
- Touch the container with the gas dispenser nozzle before removing the container lid. This provides another path to dissipate static ground charge.
- Keep the nozzle in contact with the container inlet when filling. This helps to dissipate static charge buildup from the flow of gasoline.

**Additional measures for prevention include the following:**

- Place a hazard warning label on all plastic liners warning employees not to fill portable gas containers in the bed of the truck, but to always place the containers on the ground before filling. A dash-board reminder may also be beneficial.
- Display a warning notice at or near gas pumps requiring employees to place all portable gas containers on the ground before filling.
- Use bed liners that can be grounded to the metal truck bed, thereby dissipating potential electrostatic charge.

**For more Information:**

To obtain more free information about this hazard or for information about other occupational health and safety issues:

- Visit the NIOSH Home Page on the World Wide Web at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/homepage.html>

For additional information contact risk management services at **1- 800-228-0986** and select “**safety and risk control**” from the available options.

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