

# RISK CONTROL CONSULTING

## Flammable Liquids – Safe Handling

Flammable liquids are used in many workplaces. They may range from cleaning fluids, paints, and gasoline to some more volatile and dangerous liquids. If you remember a few simple, common sense rules when handling or storing flammable liquids, you can help prevent injury to yourself and your coworkers or prevent your jobsite from going up in flames.



Flammable liquids will not burn, but as the liquid evaporates, it gives off vapors that mix with the air to form dangerous gases that can be set off by a small spark. Gasoline, for example, evaporates at temperatures as low as 45 degrees Fahrenheit below zero. As the temperature rises, the rate of evaporation increases and more and more vapors are given off. Vapors are usually heavier than air so they collect in the lowest areas they can reach. Without adequate ventilation to dissipate them, a small spark can set off a big disaster.

- Carefully read the manufacturer's label on the container of any flammable liquid before storing or using it.
- Practice good housekeeping in flammable liquid storage areas.
- Clean up spills immediately then place the cleanup rags in a closed, bottom ventilated, metal container.
- Only use approved metal safety containers or the original manufacturer's container to store flammable liquids.
- Keep the containers closed when not in use; stored away from exits or passageways.
- Store flammable liquids in a fire resistance cabinet designed and constructed to withstand a standardized 10-minute fire test. Cabinets commercially produced offer approved or listed ratings, such as United Laboratories or Factory Mutual.

Don't trust your nose to tell you whether an area or container is vapor free. Not all dangerous liquids give off vapors you can smell. Some vapors are poisonous as well as flammable. Use flammable liquids only where there is plenty of ventilation.

Be careful not to get a flammable liquid on you or your clothing. It could cause painful skin irritation or ignite your clothing and envelop you in flames. If you get it on you, wash it off or change your clothes as soon as you can.

Keep flammable liquids away from any open flame or spark and never smoke where flammable liquids are present. Treat flammable liquids with respect and follow the manufacturer's suggestions for their use.

This Tribal First Risk Control Consulting fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice. For more information on this topic, please contact Tribal First Risk Control Consulting at (888) 737-4752 or [riskcontrol@tribalfirst.com](mailto:riskcontrol@tribalfirst.com).