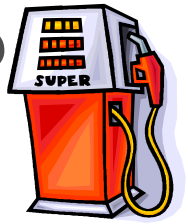
Safety At The Gas Pump



The Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal (OSFM) cautions motorists of the potential threat of fires at the gas pumps after a recent fire set off by static electricity. OSFM and the American Petroleum Institute and the Petroleum Equipment Institute are reminding motorists to avoid potential problems with static electricity at the gas pump by staying outside the vehicle during refueling, and to follow all safe refueling practices during their routine gasoline tank fill-up.

Static electricity-caused fires at the pump are extremely rare. In fact, Americans pump gasoline into their cars an estimated 11 to 12 billion times a year, generally without incident. But static electricity may build up when a motorist re-enters the vehicle during fueling and slides across the seat. When the motorist returns to the nozzle, the static may discharge at the fill point, potentially igniting gasoline vapors and causing a flash or a small-sustained fire. Potential problems with static electricity at the pump may occur any time of year, but most typically incidents have occurred when the air is cool and dry. Although static electricity-related refueling fires are rare, according to API and PEI, these incidents have caused a few injuries and some property damage.

The primary way consumers can avoid static electricity problems at the gas pump is to stay outside the vehicle while refueling. It may be a temptation to get back in the car for any number of reasons. But the average fill-up takes only two minutes, and staying outside the vehicle will greatly reduce the likelihood of any build-up of static electricity that could be discharged at the nozzle.

If a motorist experiences a fire when refueling, leave the nozzle in the fill pipe of the vehicle and back away. Leaving the nozzle in the vehicle will prevent any fire from becoming much more dangerous. Notify the station attendant immediately to shut off all dispensing devices and pumps. If the facility is unattended, use the emergency shutdown button to shut off the pump and try to summon help.

If you must re-enter your vehicle during refueling, be sure to discharge any static that may have built up before reaching for the nozzle. Static may be safely discharged by touching a metal part of the vehicle, such as the vehicle door, or some other metal surface, away from the nozzle, with a bare hand.

Consumers can minimize these and other potential fueling hazards by following safe refueling procedures all year long. Always put portable gasoline storage containers on the ground to fill them and keep the nozzle in contact with the rim of the container. Never allow children under licensed driving age to operate the pump.

Here are consumer refueling and fuel safety guidelines that will help keep you and your family safe when refueling your vehicle or filling up gasoline storage containers:

Guidelines for fueling and refueling

- Turn off your vehicle engine.
- Put your vehicle in park and/or set the emergency brake.
- Disable or turn off any auxiliary sources of ignition such as a camper or trailer heater, cooking units, or pilot lights.
- Do not smoke, light matches or lighters while refueling at the pump or when using gasoline anywhere else.
- Use only the refueling latch provided on the gasoline dispenser nozzle. Never jam the refueling latch on the nozzle open.
- Do not re-enter your vehicle during refueling. If you cannot avoid re-entering your vehicle, discharge any static build-up BEFORE reaching for the nozzle by touching something metal with a bare hand -- such as the vehicle door -- away from the nozzle.
- In the unlikely event a static-caused fire occurs when refueling, leave the nozzle in the fill pipe and back away from the vehicle. Notify the station attendant immediately.

Dispensing gasoline into a portable container

- When dispensing gasoline into a container:
- Use only an approved portable container and place it on the ground to avoid a possible static electricity ignition of fuel vapors.
- Containers should never be filled while inside a vehicle or its trunk, the bed of a pickup truck or the floor of a trailer.
- When filling a portable container, manually control the nozzle valve throughout the filling process.
- Fill a portable container slowly to decrease the chance of static electricity buildup and minimize spilling or splattering.
- Keep the nozzle in contact with the rim of the container opening while refueling.
- 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.
- Only store gasoline in approved containers as required by federal or state authorities.
- Never store gasoline in glass or any other unapproved container.
- If gasoline spills on the container, make sure that it has evaporated before you place the container in your vehicle.
- Report spills to the attendant.

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

Safety Guidelines for fuel handling

- Do not over-fill or top-off your vehicle tank, which can cause gasoline spillage.
- Never allow children under licensed driving age to operate the pump.
- Avoid prolonged breathing of gasoline vapors.
- Use gasoline only in open areas that get plenty of fresh air.
- Keep your face away from the nozzle or container opening.
- Never siphon gasoline by mouth nor put gasoline in your mouth for any reason.
- Gasoline can be harmful or fatal if swallowed.
- If someone swallows gasoline, do not induce vomiting.
- Contact a doctor or and emergency medical service provider immediately.
- Keep gasoline away from your eyes and skin; it may cause irritation.
- Remove gasoline-soaked clothing immediately.
- Use gasoline as a motor fuel only.
- Never use gasoline to wash your hands or as a cleaning solvent.