

SAFETY ALERT

FILLING FUEL CONTAINERS

This safety alert was published following a number of serious incidents that involved filling portable containers with petrol and the fumes catching alight.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Portable fuel containers, such as jerry cans, catching fire when being filled with petrol.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Vapours from flammable liquids, such as petrol, can be easily ignited by static electricity. If a container is held off the ground while filling occurs, or kept in the boot or tray of a vehicle while filling occurs, a static charge can build up, causing a spark and igniting the fuel. Fuel vapour can also be ignited by vehicle electrics.

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

When filling a portable fuel container:

- follow the directions of the service station attendant and all warning signs, and use an earthing strap if available
- put it on the ground when filling, away from all possible ignition sources
- don't leave it inside the vehicle or on a trailer when being filled
- ensure that is suitable for holding flammable liquids – it should have markings that indicate it has been manufactured to AS/NZS 2906 *Fuel containers – Portable – Plastics and metal* standards, or an equivalent (drink bottles and plastic five-litre oil containers are not safe)
- keep one hand on the container while filling, to reduce the likelihood of static electricity build up and discharge
- ensure the container cap is replaced tightly before lifting the container into the vehicle
- ensure that it is upright, secured and away from any heat source (eg the sun) when it is being transported.

IF THERE IS A FIRE

- Don't move the container
- Alert the service station attendant
- Use a fire blanket or fire extinguisher (if safe to do so) – don't use water
- Stop, drop and roll, if your clothes catch fire.