



Storing Flammable Products (BOOM!!!)

Many fires and explosions occur when improperly stored flammable products ignite. Sometimes it's because a worker is not aware of a potentially explosive condition on the jobsite or in the shop. Sometimes it's caused by a stray spark from a welder's torch, oily rags in an open drum, or fumes from oil, grease, or solvent spilled on the shop floor.

Watch for these things when considering the storage of flammable products:

- Uncapped containers
- Gas cans without OSHA required spring-loaded caps
- Fuel spills under storage drums/containers
- Fuel spills on top of containers (especially 55 gallon drums)
- Storage of flammable containers under stairways or near fire exits
- Flammable containers not stored in metal storage bins
- Discarded leaking containers
- Tanks of flammable/combustible liquids not stored in well-ventilated areas
- Containers not clearly labeled regarding their contents
- Batteries leaking or stored on their side
- Tires stored near heat-producing equipment/fuel
- Oily rags discarded in uncovered containers
- Major outdoor spillage of combustible products that do not have dikes to constrain spillage

Here are some questions you must answer:

- Do you know where the company's Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) are kept?
- Are you familiar with the data provided in an MSDS?
- Do you recognize the meaning of placarding on fuel trucks and vehicles carrying flammable, toxic, or caustic products?
- Is a no-smoking policy enforced on your jobsites?
- One fire extinguisher strategically located in these storage areas?

Faulty storage of flammable products leads to many fires, injuries, and even death. Do your part to prevent these dangerous conditions.

Can welding ignite nearby flammable products? Yes. And those injured by faulty welding procedures include not only the welder, but nearby workers and passersby.

On your jobsite (or in storage areas), are steps taken to safeguard nearby workers and combustible materials within 35 feet of welding operations? Are welding shields properly used?

Does your company provide you and the welders with personal protective equipment? How about canvass or fire-retardant screens to protect you from welder “flash”? Does the welder wear a welder’s mask? Are there any flammable products or gasoline fed equipment, tools, or vehicles near the welding process?

Did you know that oxygen enrichment, which can be enhanced by the welding process, can cause an explosion, particularly in a confined space (i.e, manholes, pits, tunnels, shafts, silos, vaults, large-bore pipe, and certain trenches)?

What other types of hazards can be created by welders, welding processes, and welding supplies? Improper storage of acetylene/oxygen tanks (empty or full) can lead to explosions and fires. If you can see tanks lying on the ground or leaning away from the welding cart, assume that an accident is imminent and report it immediately to your supervisor. These tanks must always be stored and secured in an upright position with the valve protectors fully in place.

What can you do about these situations? Notify your supervisor if you see what you believe is an unsafe storage condition. Be your company’s eyes and ears in the field, in the shop, and in and around company equipment and vehicles.