

“Stop static” and Refuel safely with every fill-up

Washington, September 23—The American Petroleum Institute and the Petroleum Equipment Institute have joined together to remind motorists how to avoid potential problems with static electricity at the gas pump. The groups also are encouraging motorists to follow all safe refueling practices with every fill-up.

Fall brings cool, dry air to many parts of the county –The typical climatic conditions when static electricity build-up is most likely to occur. Static electricity may build up when a motorist re-enters the vehicle during fueling. When the motorist then returns to the vehicle fell pipe during or at the end of refueling, the static may discharge at the fill point, potentially causing a flash fire or a small-sustained fire with gasoline refueling vapors.

Static electricity-related fires at retail gasoline outlets are extremely unusual, according to API and PEI, but in rare circumstances, these incidents have caused a few injuries and 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 when it’s cold, or for any number of reasons. But the average fill-up takes only two minutes, and staying outside the vehicle will greatly minimize the likelihood of any build-up of static electricity that could be discharged at the nozzle.

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

Motorists who cannot avoid getting back into the vehicle during refueling should discharge any static away from the fill point upon exiting the care before going back to the pump nozzle. Touching a metal fuel refueling may safely discharge static, see API’s web site at [www. Api.org/customer](http://www.Api.org/customer) and PEI’s web site at www.pei.org/static.

The Petroleum Equipment institute has researched 150 cases of static. The results where very surprising:

- 1) Out of 150 cases, almost all of them were women.
- 2) Almost all cases involved the person getting back in their vehicle while the nozzle was still pumping gas. When finished, they went back to pull nozzle out. The fire started then as a result of static discharge.

- 3) Most men never get back in their vehicle until completely finished. This is why they are seldom involved in these types of fires.
- 4) Most had on rubber-soled shoes.
- 5) Don't ever use cell phones when pumping gas. (The RF energy from a cell phone (a radio transmitter) can cause a sparking on bare metal, much like aluminum foil in a microwave oven.)
- 6) It is the vapors that come out of the gas that cause the fire, when connected with static discharge.
- 7) In 29 fires, the vehicle had been reentered and the nozzle was touched during refueling. This occurred in a variety of makes and models. Some resulting in extensive damage to the vehicle, to the station, and to the customer.
- 8) Seventeen fires occurred before, during or immediately after the gas cap was removed and before fueling began.

NEVER get back into the vehicle while filling it with gas. If you absolutely HAVE to get in your vehicle while the gas is pumping, make sure you get out, close the door TOUCHING THE METAL, before you touch the nozzle. This way the static from your body will be discharged before you ever remove the nozzle.

Safe Refueling and Fuel Handling Guidelines for Consumers

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:

- Turn off your vehicle engine while refueling. 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.

- 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
- Do not over-fill or top off your vehicle tank, which can cause gasoline spillage.
- 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
- When dispensing gasoline into a container, use only an approved portable container and place it on the ground when refueling 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
- Only store gasoline in approved containers as required by federal or state authorities. Never store gasoline in glass or any other unapproved containers.
- 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.
- Fill container no more than 95 percent full to allow for expansion.
- Place cap tightly on the container after filling- do not use containers if they do not seal properly.
- 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.
- Never siphon gasoline by mouth do not put gasoline in your mouth for any reason. Gasoline can be harmful or fatal if swallowed. If someone swallows gasoline, do not induce vomiting. Contract a doctor 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.

If you have any questions, or we may be of assistance, please call the Milpitas Fire Department Public Education Unit at 586-3365.

