Staying Safe At the Gasoline Pump

Static electricity-related incidents at retail gasoline outlets are extremely unusual, but the potential for them to happen appears to be the highest during cool and dry climate conditions. In rare circumstances, these static related incidents have resulted in brief flash fires occurring at the fill point. Consumers can take steps to minimize these and other potential fueling hazards by following safe refueling procedures all year long.

- **Motorists should not get back into their vehicles while pumping gas.** It may be a temptation to get back in the car when it is cold, but the average fill-up takes only two minutes, and staying outside greatly minimizes the likelihood of any static electricity build-up that could be discharged at the nozzle.

  A build-up of static electricity can be caused by re-entering a vehicle during fueling, particularly in cool or cold and dry climate conditions. If the motorist then returns to the vehicle fill pipe during refueling, the static may discharge at the fill point, causing a flash fire or small sustained fire with gasoline refueling vapors.

- **Motorists who cannot avoid getting back into the vehicle should always first touch a metal part of the vehicle with a bare hand, such as the door, or some other metal surface, away from the fill point upon exiting the vehicle.**

Here are additional consumer refueling 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.**

  If 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 that 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 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 immediately.

- **Use gasoline as a motor fuel only.** Never use gasoline to wash your hands or as a cleaning solvent.

- **Never allow children to operate the pump.**