

Safety Alert

Two workers burnt in separate refuelling incidents

The purpose of this Safety Alert is to highlight the risk of fires and serious burn injuries during refuelling of petrol-powered equipment.

Background

Two Territory workers were seriously burnt last month in separate incidents while refuelling petrol powered pressure cleaners.

The first incident occurred at a worksite in the Coomalie Shire where a worker using a pressure washer had run the equipment dry of fuel. During refuelling using a 20 litre Jerry Can, the petrol ignited burning the worker and damaging the equipment.

The second incident occurred at a worksite in Darwin. During this incident, the worker also ran the pressure washer dry of fuel. During refuelling, where the worker also used a 20 litre Jerry Can, petrol was spilled onto the pressure washer causing the fuel to ignite.



Image: CCTV footage captured the moment a worker was engulfed in flames during refuelling.

Possible contributing factors

- In both incidents the engine was not given time to cool down before refuelling.
- Petrol was splashed onto the hot engine parts during refuelling.
- The refuelling was done using a 20 litre Jerry Can which may have been difficult to handle.
- In both incidents, the hose connected to the pressure washer was used to put out the flames. Using water would have spread the burning petrol, making the fire worse.

Action required

- Refer to manufacturer instructions for the safe operations of the equipment.
- Refer to the Safety Data Sheet for any hazardous chemicals such as petrol to be used.
- Ensure a risk assessment is carried out before commencing any work.
- Ensure safe work procedures are developed in consultation with workers.
- When using fuel-driven equipment, always allow the plant or equipment to cool down before attempting to refuel.
- The autoignition temperature of petrol is between 247°C to 280°C which means a surface at this temperature can ignite the fuel and a naked flame is not required to cause the fire.
- Use a large funnel to prevent fuel spilling.
- Use smaller (5 or 10 litres) Jerry Cans which are easier to handle before refuelling the plant or equipment.
- Ensure a Class B fire extinguisher is available during refuelling to put out any petrol fires.

Further information

For further information, please refer to the following:

Safety Alerts

- [Worker burned during refuelling](#)
- [Worker burned in fuel explosion](#)

Codes of Practice

- [How to manage work health and safety risks](#)
- [Managing risks of hazardous chemicals in the workplace](#)

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