

TOOLBOX TALK #9

WORKING WITH FLAMMABLE LIQUIDS

Nearly every workplace has potentially dangerous liquids, including fuels, paint thinners, solvents, cleaners, waxes and adhesives according to the Center for Occupational Safety and Health.

Classifying liquids as flammable or combustible depends on the liquid's flashpoint. Experts indicate that a liquid's flashpoint is based on the lowest temperature at which it gives off enough vapor to start burning at its surface. Flammable liquids have flashpoints lower than 100°F, whereas combustible liquids have flashpoints greater than 100°F but lower than 200°F.



A mixture of vapor and air must be ignited for a flammable or combustible liquid fire to start. Common ignition sources include:

- Sparks from electrical equipment
- Sparks, arcs and hot surfaces resulting from welding operations
- Static electricity sparks
- Flames from portable torches and heating units
- Hot surfaces, including boilers, furnaces, steam pipes, electric lamps, irons, electric coils and hot bearings
- Embers from incinerators, fireboxes and furnaces
- Smoking

To avoid a fire, eliminate ignition sources. Do not smoke or operate spark-producing machinery near these liquids, and use only explosion-proof equipment in hazardous areas.

When working with flammable and combustible liquids, a well-ventilated workplace is crucial. A properly working ventilation system will be able to remove flammable vapors, reducing the chance of ignition.

It is recommended that you have an assessment performed by a qualified person to determine if your jobsite, including how you store, handle and dispose of flammable and combustible liquids, is adequate.