Combustible Liquids

eSafetyLine

What does Combustible Really Mean?

It's common knowledge that it is important to limit how much and how flammable and combustible liquids are stored at a work site. For either type there is a very real danger of explosion or fire. It is important for all that work around these liquids to have some basic safety information to help keep them safe.

First, what is the difference between a flammable and a combustible liquid? A flammable liquid is much more volatile. This means that their vapors or fumes can ignite at temperatures below 100°F, some as low as 32° and below. Gasoline, alcohols, lacquer thinners and some paint thinners are some examples of flammable liquids commonly used and found around a jobsite. This means that at normal room temperatures, flammable liquids can give off enough vapors to form burnable mixtures with air. As a result, they can be a serious fire hazard.

Flammable liquid fires burn very fast. They also give off a lot of heat and often clouds of thick, black, toxic smoke. On the other hand, a combustible liquid must reach temperatures higher than 100°F to release enough vapors or fumes to ignite. Combustible liquids common at a jobsite include fuel oil, kerosene and linseed oil. Combustible liquids at temperatures above their 100° also release enough vapor to burn. Hot combustible liquids can be as serious a fire hazard as flammable liquids.

Most flammable and combustible liquids flow easily. A small spill can cover a large area of workbench or floor. Burning liquids can flow under doors, down stairs and even into neighboring buildings, spreading a fire long distances in a very short amount of time. Materials like wood, cardboard and cloth can easily absorb flammable and combustible liquids. Even after a spill has been cleaned up, a dangerous amount of liquid could still remain in surrounding materials or

clothing, giving off hazardous vapors. It is important to remember to remove and discard any materials that may have absorbed a flammable or combustible liquid. They still pose a fire hazard for months after the spill.

The most obvious health risk from either flammable or combustible liquids comes from the danger of fire and explosion. After the immediate danger of a fire, there can be other properties of these liquids that may be hazardous to workers. Flammable and combustible liquids can cause health problems if the vapors are breathed in, eyes or skin comes in contact, or if the liquid is swallowed. This is why it is critical that flammable and combustible liquids be stored only in containers approved for such liquids. Some flammable and combustible liquids are corrosive, which means that they can destroy or irreversibly damage another surface or substance they comes into contact with.

Discussion Questions

What is the main difference between flammable and combustible liquids?

Other than the potential for fire, what are other possible health risks?

MEETING / TRAINING
ATTENDANCE ROSTER

COMPANY: _____ _____ **SAFETY MEETING**

JOB/DEPT: _____ _____ **SAFETY TRAINING**

DATE: ____/____/_____ **TIME:** _____

TOPICS ADDRESSED: _____

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EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURES

_____ _____ _____

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EMPLOYEE SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: _____

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ACTION TAKEN: _____

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Supervisor's Signature **Date**

_____ _____/_____/_____

Safety Coordinator's Signature **Date**