

# MAFES Dawg Tracks



September 28, 2009

Preventing Flammable Liquids & Gasoline Fires



There are many flammable liquids around farms, such as gasoline, propane, and probably paint solvents and degreasers in some areas. All of these liquids are necessary in our various works, but as in all areas, there are basic precautions that we should take to avoid fires. Fires themselves are bad enough, but there is always the chance of serious injuries and possible loss of life, as well as equipment and property.

Following are some precautionary tips for storing fuels and flammable liquids that, if practiced, can save the above circumstances from becoming a reality:

- Built in protective features that will prohibit children from being able to draw fuel from the facilities or tanks. Keep portable fuel cans out of the reach of kids and warn them strongly against matches or lighters around fuel containers or facilities. Don't allow fuel to be stored in food or drink containers.
- Above ground fuel storage tanks should be located at least 50 feet from buildings and 100 feet from public use borderlines.
- Fuel tanks and pumps should be located so that farm equipment can't bump against them. Installing bumpers to protect the tanks are a cheap investment to help protect the tanks and pumps.
- Gasoline storage tanks should be vented to minimize vapor loss and to discharge vapors away from any source of ignition. The venting system should meet the National Fire Protection Association's, NFPA 54 National Fuel Gas Code.
- When using portable fuel containers, be sure that these containers are labeled with the contents. Gasoline cans should be red in color and diesel should be green. Both types of fuels should be stored in cool and well-ventilated locations away from living quarters and ignition sources.
- On all portable tanks, read the instructions on the labels and pay special attention to comments about flammability and other safety precautions.
- Store flammable products in their original containers, in a cool place, out of the sun and in good ventilation. Dispose or store used cleaning rags in a metal container.
- Refrain from using grinders, welders or other types of spark-producing tools around flammable materials or where vapors are present.
- Do not use gasoline, benzene, naphtha and similar products for cleaning or as degreasing agents. There are other agents available for this use such as vegetable oil and some synthetic base solutions.
- Refueling the engine – Turn the engine off and allow it to cool down, move anyone away and extinguish all smoking materials. The "cooling down" period is very important if you have a mower with the tank located at the rear. If you were to have a rear fuel spill it could come in contact with the engine.
- When filling a portable tank or an equipment tank, please be sure to release the tank very slowly, allowing the pressure to dissipate. This is particularly true if you are using gasoline, and the equipment is located at the rear of the tractor and above the tank. In hot weather, like we have been enjoying, pressure can build up in the tank. If the cap vent is clogged fuel can escape when the top is removed. Always use a standard cap to help avoid the gasoline backing up and releasing when you open the cap. Always try to keep the vent-cap open.
- Large propane tanks should be at least 50 feet from the nearest building and 20 feet or more from above ground tanks. Household "bottled gas" tanks should be at least three feet from a window or door and six feet from a lightning rod. Children should not be allowed to play around fuel tanks.
- Provide and maintain a solid base for propane tanks to avoid them from settling, tipping or breaking the connections. If the tanks are in a flood zone, be sure to anchor them securely.
- Make regular checks for propane leaks and check the gauges to protect them from dirt and weather elements. If you smell gas, turn the valve off, open the windows and doors to ventilate the area, turn off all electrical equipment, clear the building and call a repairman to find and correct the problem.
- Make sure that electrical equipment is grounded and keep switches, motors and connections in good condition to reduce the chance of sparking or arcing.

**SAFETY'S INTENTION IS  
ACCIDENT PREVENTION**

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**ALERT TODAY~  
ALIVE TOMORROW~**