



# FLAMMABLE LIQUIDS

Flammable liquids are used on a lot of job sites. Functionally, a flammable material is one that will catch on fire easily and burn fast. These materials present very serious fire hazards. When you see the word “FLAMMABLE” on a can, tank, or drum you must keep fire, sparks, & other sources of ignition away from that container.

Surprisingly, the flammable liquid themselves do not burn; their vapors burn. In particular, this means that even an apparently empty container could catch fire or explode if it still contains vapors. Note too that since it’s the vapors that ignite, the sparks or flame doesn’t need to touch the liquid to start a fire.

All liquids evaporate. Whenever you have a container of any kind of liquid, you can be sure that there are some vapors in the air just above the surface of the liquid. The vapor-air mixture is what would catch fire if you lit a match near an open can of gasoline. The leanest vapor-air mixture that will burn is called the lower explosive range. If ignited in the open, this mixture will likely produce a big puff and a sheet of flame. While there is no explosion, the heat and flame can cause burns and damaged equipment. Inside a building or tank however, the pressure builds in a fraction of a second, resulting in an explosion.

## **Examples of common flammables:**

- Acetone
- Gasoline
- MEK
- Lacquer Thinner

## **Your safety depends on using flammable materials with caution:**

- Never smoke around flammable materials.
- Never perform any hot work (cutting, grinding, welding) around flammables.
- Store them only in approved labeled containers.
- Keep container lids closed.
- Clean up spills promptly.
- Know the location of fire extinguishers and how to use them.