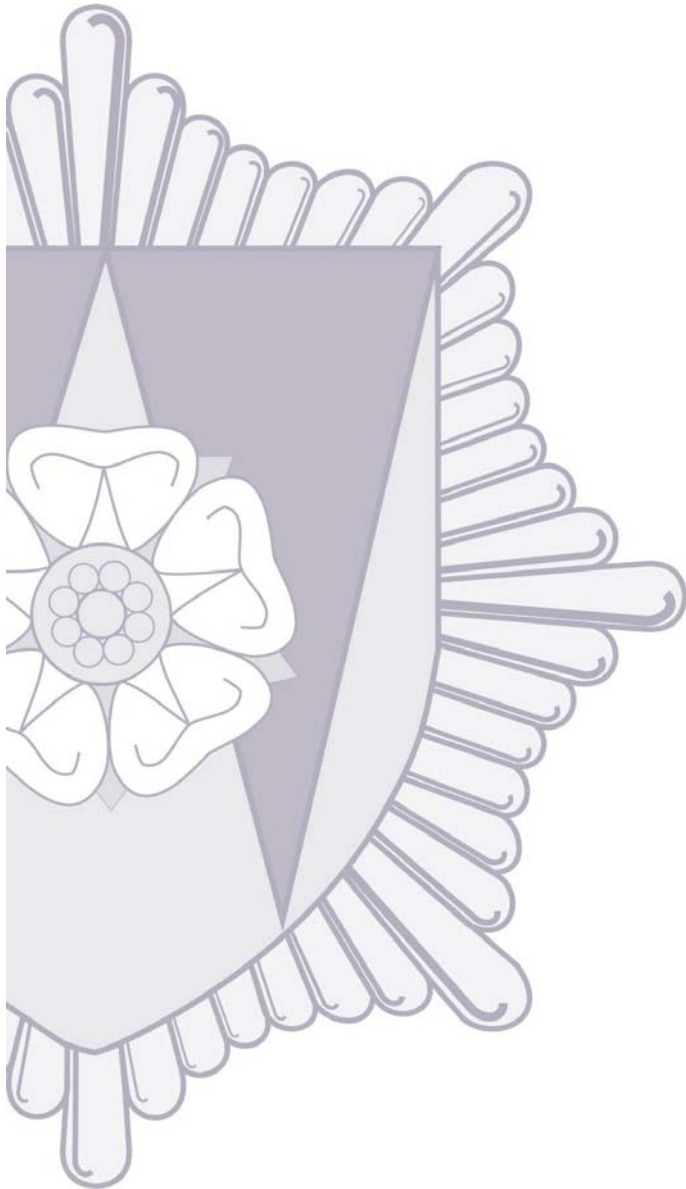


# West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service

Fire Safety - Information Note FS-INF037

Storage of Petroleum-Spirit in Cans & Drums



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**PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING**

# Fire Safety - Information Note FS-INF037

## The Storage Of Petroleum-Spirit In Cans & Drums

### 1 Introduction

1.1 This Information Note gives a précis of the rules and regulations that apply to the domestic [non-workplace] storage of petroleum-spirit in cans and drums.

### 2 Definition of Petroleum-spirit:

The definition of petroleum-spirit is 'petroleum which, when tested in accordance with Part A.9 of the Annex to the European Commission Directive 92/69 EEC, has a flash point of less than 21<sup>0</sup>C.

### 3 Fire and Explosion Hazards:

3.1 Petroleum-spirit is a volatile liquid that gives-off vapours even at sub-zero temperatures. The vapour, when mixed with air in certain proportions, can form a flammable atmosphere, which can deflagrate or explode if there is an accumulation in a confined space and a source of ignition is present.

3.2 A flammable atmosphere exists when the proportion of vapour to air is within the approximate range of 1% to 8%. Petrol vapour is heavier than air and does not disperse easily in still air conditions. The vapours tend to sink to the lowest level of the surroundings and will accumulate in cellars and drains etc.

3.3 It is, therefore, essential that the containers are of a sound vapour tight construction and the place in which the containers are located is suitable for the storage of petrol and free from sources of ignition.

3.4 In circumstances where it is necessary to keep petrol, the containers should be stored in a garage or some other suitable outbuilding. **Under no circumstances should petrol be kept in a house or other residential accommodation.**

### 4 Legislation:

4.1 The relevance of the laws relating to the storage of petroleum-spirit in cans and drums is dependant on whether or not the place of keeping is a workplace<sup>1</sup> and if it is not a workplace, the purpose for which the petrol is to be used.

### 5 Storage of Petrol at Domestic and Non-workplace Premises/Properties:

5.1 Where petrol is kept at domestic premises/property or any other place where no person is employed to work (e.g. a recreational club where all the maintenance work is carried out by the members), the storage is controlled by either the Petroleum (Consolidation) Act 1928 or the Petroleum-Spirit (Motor Vehicles etc) Regulations 1929 (MVR).

5.2 If the quantity of petrol does not exceed 275 litres and it is kept as a fuel for an internal combustion engine(s) and not for the purpose of sale, the MVR apply. MVR lays-down a set of strict rules which cover the construction and marking of the containers, the construction of the storage place and a requirement (in certain circumstances) to notify the petroleum licensing authority (PLA).

5.3 In circumstances where the quantity of petrol exceeds 275 litres and/or is kept for purposes other than as a fuel for internal combustion engines; such keeping will only be legal if a petroleum licence has been granted by the PLA under the provisions of the Petroleum (Consolidation) Act 1928. There is an exception to this rule where quantity of petrol does not exceed 15 litres; in this case a licence is not required. Where a licence is required, the PLA has the powers to attach site specific conditions that are intended to control the risk of fires or explosions.

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<sup>1</sup> A précis of the regulations applying to the 'workplace' storage of petrol can be found on the West Yorkshire Fire Service Information Note 50.

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5.4 The Petroleum-Spirit (Plastic Containers) Regulations 1982 apply to the keeping of petrol (for use as fuel for an internal combustion engine) at domestic premises and any other places where persons are not employed to work. These Regulations impose restrictions on the: -

- construction, nominal capacity (5 litres) and marking of plastic containers;
- places where they can be kept; and
- maximum number of plastic containers (2) that can be kept in any storage place.

### **6 Petroleum Licensing Authority:**

6.1 The West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service is the PLA for the whole of the Metropolitan County of West Yorkshire.

### **7 Further Information:**

The Health and Safety Executive's publications<sup>2</sup> HSG51<sup>3</sup> and HSG140<sup>4</sup> respectively give more detailed information on the storage and handling of flammable liquids.

Petroleum Inspectors of the West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service are available to advise on matters related to the MVR and petrol licensing. They can be contacted on 01274 655 785.

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<sup>2</sup> Available from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 6FS. Telephone: 01787 881165. Fax01787 313995.

<sup>3</sup> HSG51 The Storage of Flammable Liquids in Containers. ISBN 0-7176-1471-9.

<sup>4</sup> HSG140 The Safe Use and Handling of Flammable Liquids. ISBN0-7176-0967-7.

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