

NFPA Fact Sheets

Safety at service stations

Since 1980, the number of vehicle fires at service stations has more than doubled, partly because of the increase in the number of vehicles on the road, while structure fires and other fires decreased by 10 percent. Starting in the late 1990s, NFPA and other organizations have received isolated reports of flash fires, apparently caused by static electricity, while patrons were pumping gasoline.



Facts & Figures*

- An estimated 7,400 fires and explosions occurred at public service stations per year from 1994 through 1998. That means that, on average, one in every 13 service stations experienced a fire. These 7,400 fires caused an annual average of two civilian deaths, 70 civilian injuries and \$18 million in property damage.
- Of those 7,400 fires, nearly two-thirds (4,620) involved vehicles. Vehicle fires led to an annual average of one civilian death, 37 civilian injuries and \$7.7 million in property damage.
- Mechanical or electrical problems caused three out of four vehicle fires at public service stations.
- Gasoline was the material first ignited in one-third of vehicle fires at these properties.
- Seventeen percent of the outside fires (excluding vehicle fires) and 10 percent of the structure fires were started by cigarettes.
- Static discharge was blamed for 3.2 percent of fires that occurred outside vehicles or structures.

(*From NFPA's *Special Data Information Package: Fires in or at Service Stations and Motor Vehicle Repair and Paint Shops*, April 2002) **Members: [download this report for free](#) (PDF, 226 KB)**

Gasoline safety tips:

- Turn off your vehicle's engine when refueling.
- Keep gasoline and other fuels out of children's sight and reach. Gasoline is highly toxic in addition to being a fire hazard. **NEVER** allow a child to pump gas.
- Don't smoke, light matches or use lighters while refueling.
- Pay attention to what you're doing. Pumping gas is the transfer of a hazardous substance; don't engage in other activities.
- If you must use any electronic device, such as cell phones, computers or portable radios while refueling, follow manufacturer's instructions.
- Use only the refueling latch on the gasoline dispenser nozzle, if there is one. Do not jam the latch with an object to hold it open.
- To avoid spills, do not top off or overfill your vehicle.
- After pumping gasoline, leave the nozzle in the tank opening for a few seconds to avoid drips when you remove it.



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- If a fire starts while you're refueling, don't remove the nozzle from the vehicle or try to stop the flow of gasoline. Leave the area immediately and call for help.
- Don't get in and out of your vehicle while refueling. A static electric charge can develop on your body as you slide across the seat, and when you reach for the pump, a spark can ignite gasoline vapor.
- If you must get into the vehicle during refueling, discharge any static electricity by touching metal on the outside of the vehicle, away from the filling point, before removing the nozzle from your vehicle.
- Use only approved portable containers for transporting or storing gasoline. Make sure the container is in a stable position.
- Never fill a portable container when it is in or on the vehicle. Always place the container on the ground first. Fires caused by static charges have occurred when people filled portable containers in the back of pick-up trucks, particularly those with plastic bed liners. Removing the container will also prevent a dangerous spill of gasoline.
- When filling a portable container, keep the nozzle in direct contact with the container. Fill it only about 95 percent full to leave room for expansion.