

Storage of Petrol at Home

This leaflet is intended for people who use or store petrol at home. It gives some general advice on how to store small quantities of petrol safely for private use in motor vehicles, lawn mowers, generators and other domestic machinery. This guide sets out what is safe and legal when it comes to keeping petrol at home.

Always remember, petrol is dangerous so keep it away from any means of ignition and do not smoke when using it.

Petroleum is highly flammable, explosive and toxic. There are limits on how much you can keep at home.

There is more detail about this below.

How much petrol may I keep?

You can only keep a minimal amount of petrol in your home. You may keep up to 30 litres of petrol within suitable containers. This limit also applies to any containers kept in a vehicle parked in the garage or on the driveway (but not to the internal fuel tank of the vehicle).

If you want to keep over 30 litres and less than 275 litres or if you have a business and dispense petrol mechanically or electrically into motor vehicles you must notify your local Petroleum Enforcement Authority (PEA) in writing, with the name of the occupier and address of the premises.

Anyone who wishes to store larger quantities than this, or use larger containers, is required to notify the local PEA and to store the petrol in accordance with the regulations (as below) – for further details contact your local PEA. Storage of more than 275 litres (60 gallons) of petrol requires a petroleum storage certificate - again, contact the local PEA.

Where can I store petrol?

The best place to store petrol is in the tank of your car. However, it is accepted that there will be times when it is necessary to have small quantities of petrol at home for uses such as filling up a lawnmower or petrol-powered garden tools.

Petrol must not be stored in a house, flat or dwelling. It must be kept:

- a) in a shed
- b) in a garage

Containers of petrol should only be stored in a well-ventilated, secure outbuilding away from other buildings and from all sources of ignition, such as fires, lights and any electrical points such as sockets or fuse boxes.

Storage containers

If you want to store petrol at home then you must have the right containers. You may use a portable container which must:

- be made of either metal or plastic that is suitable and safe for the purpose and will not significantly degrade due to exposure to petrol or naturally occurring ultra-violet radiation;
- have a nominal capacity no greater than 10 litres if made of plastic;
- be no greater than 20 litres if made of metal;
- be designed and constructed to be robust, and to prevent the leak of liquid and vapour;
- Containers should be marked with the words 'PETROL' and 'HIGHLY FLAMMABLE'; hazard warning signs, their capacity and the manufacturer's details.

You should not fill the container completely and it is recommended that it is only filled to a maximum of 85% to allow for expansion of the petrol.

What if someone doesn't comply with these requirements?

Petroleum storage is regulated under The Petroleum (Consolidation) Regulations 2014, in force as of 1 October 2014. If you have any concerns that someone is storing and dispensing petrol in excess of the above amounts, you should discuss your concerns with your local Petroleum Officer at your local petroleum enforcement authority (PEA).

The PEA is your fire and rescue service if you live in Greater London or one of the metropolitan counties. If you live anywhere else in England, Scotland or Wales, your local council is your petroleum authority.

Storing Petrol – Safety Tips

1. Do not smoke when using petrol.
2. Never fill the tank of an internal combustion engine inside a building. Petrol fumes are explosive and narcotic.
3. Do not fill the fuel tank of a petrol-engined appliance whilst the engine is hot. Fuel spilt on hot surfaces (such as an exhaust pipe) could spontaneously ignite.
4. Never use petrol as a fire lighting or 'fire refreshing' medium. Petrol vapour can 'flash back' and ignite containers and operatives.
5. Never put or keep petrol in unsuitable containers. Some plastic containers will dissolve when petrol is put in them. Always use secure metal or approved plastic containers which are properly marked.
6. Be careful not to spill petrol on to clothing. Should clothing become contaminated be careful to keep away from any source of ignition and change clothes as soon as possible.
7. Do not use petrol as a means of 'washing' off grease or oil deposits from tools and equipment.
8. Always store petrol safely, in proper containers, in a well-ventilated place, never under a stairway, in a passage or in domestic house. Ensure the storage is away from any source of ignition (eg - electrical equipment, heaters, etc.). Keep it away from other combustible material.
9. Never pour petrol into drains or water courses - it is a criminal offence to do so.

Check containers regularly for leaks. If you smell petrol fumes, ventilate the area and make sure that nobody smokes or turns electrical switches on or off. The slightest spark could cause an explosion.

Petrol and the Environment

If petrol leaks to the ground it can cause serious environmental damage by pollution soil and water and may travel considerable distance from the point at where it was spilt.

Recovery of petrol once it has leaked into the ground is usually very difficult because the fuel tends to bind to soil particles and may partially dissolve in water, contaminating drinking water and watercourses. The vapour from petrol may collect in confined spaces and under buildings presenting a significant hazard. Collection and removal of spilt fuel is a task best undertaken by a specialist contractor.

Further Information

Regulatory authorities

A full list of petroleum enforcement authorities is available at:
<http://www.apea.org.uk/contacts/2>

Further information on storing petrol safely

This is available on the Health & Safety Executive's website:
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/fireandexplosion/petroleum.htm>



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Environmental Protection UK is an active organisation which monitors environmental issues and lobbies Government and other authoritative bodies on important issues, with the aim of improving the quality of life for all UK residents.

Contact us at Environmental Protection UK

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