Toolbox Talk

Refueling Equipment Safely

Introduction:

Refueling is a common task performed at many job sites; It's often performed without much thought to the possible dangers it poses. Gasoline fuel is a volatile, flammable liquid that is colorless and has a distinctive odor that provides a warning of its health and safety hazards. When refueling equipment or vehicles, it's important to remember you are working with a liquid that can easily catch fire or explode; be thoughtful of your safety and that of your co-workers.

Discussion Points:

- Health and safety hazards associated with refueling
- Continuously bond equipment for static electricity
- Use only approved equipment
- Refuel in designated area that is clearly marked
- Report fuel spills according to health, safety, and environmental regulations

Discussion:

Refueling should be performed in a designated area that is clearly marked. The area should be kept clean and free of garbage, debris, and all combustible materials. Make sure there is a fire extinguisher in the area, along with other fire safety equipment, a spill cleanup kit, and absorbent materials. Clean up all spills immediately and watch for any potential leaks. Report fuel spills according to health, safety, and environmental regulations. Keep the area surrounding the refueling area unobstructed, ensuring equipment can enter and exit without obstruction.

Discharge of static electricity while dispensing fuel is a serious hazard that can potentially lead to a fire or an explosion. The risk of static electricity discharge is greatest when the nozzle is removed from the tank because the fuel passing through a hose creates static electricity.

Pipes, tanks, valves, and dispensing equipment must be bonded continuously to avoid static electricity discharge. All equipment must be Underwriters Laboratories (UL) listed for its intended usage. This UL listing ensures that the hose and nozzle are bonded from equipment to the tank being filled; it's critical that the static electricity flow to the ground.

All fuel should be properly stored and labeled. Storage and refueling areas should be well-ventilated away from all sources of ignition, sparks, and open flames, including water heater, furnace, and other heating devices; avoid breathing vapors or mist, if fuel comes in contact with clothing or skin, immediately remove clothing, allowing clothes to dry outside before washing, and wash skin with soap and water.

There is an increased risk of fire or explosion resulting in injury or death when refueling is not performed according to OSHA regulations, National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) guidelines, and fuel dispensing requirements.

As always, stay safe out there!

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