

Safety Cans for Flammable Liquids

Did you know that a single gallon of gasoline contains the explosive force of two or three sticks of dynamite? That's more than enough to destroy your workshop, your house, your garage and even cause serious personal injury and/or death.

If you store oil-based paints, stains, solvents and other flammable liquids in or near your shop, you need to be sure you're doing so safely. Here are a few of the important rules...most nothing more than common sense.

- Nothing flammable near heat or spark sources such as furnaces, water heaters, stoves, etc.
- Dispose of solvent-soaked rags properly and promptly...preferably outdoors where solvents will evaporate more safely. NEVER leave them laying around the shop.
- Store flammable stains, varnishes and finishes in metal containers. If possible, store them inside a ventilated metal cabinet that's well isolated from other flammables such as sawdust, papers, lumber, etc.
- Be sure there's plenty of ventilation whenever and wherever you apply finishes or use solvents...and that there are no open flames, sparks or heat sources nearby. Whenever possible, work outdoors.

These are, by no means, all of the rules of safety for working with and storing flammable finishes and solvents...just a good beginning.

However, before we finish, we do want to talk just a bit more about the most volatile of these materials...solvents. Mineral spirits, turpentine, lacquer thinner, denatured alcohol, and more. The list goes on and on to include some of the most highly flammable, noxious and notorious chemicals on the face of the earth. Thank Heavens, many of the others that used to be fairly commonplace have been outlawed!

So, what's one of the best ways to protect yourself from the hazards presented by these solvents? Metal Safety Cans. By their very nature, solvents are typically far more highly flammable than most paints and stains. For that reason, they should be handled more carefully.

These cans are available in a variety of sizes and configurations from one quart through five gallons in either round or rectangular shapes. There are three things they all have in common.

Openings

First and foremost, all have a spring-loaded cap that will release building internal pressures caused by expansion and the vaporization of the contents. The caps should re-close themselves automatically after venting and become liquid and vapor-tight.

Flash Arrestor

The flash arrestor is a screen-like device inserted into all openings of a safety can. This device prevents ignited vapors from entering the can and causing an explosion.

Strength & Stability

It's best to choose a durable, metal can that will be able to withstand more than normal abuse. Containers should not tip easily.

Aside from these characteristics, be sure the container you purchase is labeled "UL" or "FM", signifying approval by a reputable testing laboratory.

