

ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



29 Hazen Drive, Concord, New Hampshire 03301 • (603) 271-3503 • www.des.nh.gov

ARD-38

2013

Portable Fuel Containers Help Improve Air and Water Quality

A portable fuel container (PFC) generally holds 1 to 5 gallons of fuel used for small equipment such as lawn mowers, ski mobiles and snow blowers. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates there are about 80 million portable fuel containers in use in the United States and between commercial and private usage, over 70,000 gallons of fuel are spilled from them, each year.

The Problem with Gas Containers

In the past, small gasoline containers made of plastic or metal were designed to accommodate quick and easy refueling of gasoline. During refueling with old containers, gasoline is sometimes spilled onto equipment or on the ground and when this occurs, chemicals contained in the gasoline, such as benzene or toluene, can contaminate drinking water wells or public water supplies.



Gasoline fumes contain smog-forming "volatile organic compounds" (or VOCs) that escape from old containers into the air when fuel is being dispensed. Vapors also escape through secondary vent holes in the containers or inadequately capped spouts and can even permeate through the plastic walls of the container.

PFC Regulations Reduce Water and Air Pollution

As of January 1, 2009, all portable fuel containers sold in the U.S. must conform to EPA *Mobile Source Air Toxic Regulations* and Federal *Children's Gasoline Burn Protection Act* as well as New Hampshire regulations *Env-A 4000 Portable Fuel Container Spillage Control*. These regulations require the PFC to:

- Have an automatic fuel shut-off before the fuel tank being filled overflows;
- Have a single opening for pouring and venting;
- Be certified to meet California Air Resources Board CP-501 Phase II standards;
- Have an automatic fuel shut-off when removed from the fuel tank being filled;
- Automatically close when not in use; and,
- Have childproof features as designated under the Children's Gasoline Burn Protection Act.



Consumers Can Help

Consumers can take a positive step toward helping the environment by replacing their older, non-compliant cans with the new and improved fuel containers. As a conscientious consumer, when you shop for a new portable gas container, read the label carefully and look for those that are spill-proof and meet the new standards. The new cans may be identified by the phrases such as "Spill-Proof System" or "No-Spill" on the label.

In addition to using the new, improved gas cans, consumers can protect air and water quality from harmful gasoline contaminants in the following ways.

- Avoid spilling gasoline on the ground; don't top off your fuel tank when filling your lawn mower, snow blower, or other yard or recreational equipment.
- Refuel or repair engines away from water supplies or wells, or if possible, over a concrete floor, and immediately clean up any gas or oil spills.
- Dispose of waste gasoline and clean up materials safely and properly. Never drain gasoline or oil onto the ground or pour down drains.
- Never use gasoline to start fires.
- Use caution when refueling water craft to avoid spilling gasoline into water bodies.
- Store old gasoline properly by keeping the containers tightly closed and placing them in dry, well-ventilated locations.



Leftover Gasoline

Always try to use all the remaining gasoline in your seasonal equipment such as lawn mowers by the end of the season so the gasoline doesn't remain in the equipment for long periods. After a month or two, gasoline can get gummy from dirt, condensation and rust turning usable gasoline into a hazardous waste. Make certain you dispose of your unusable gasoline properly by taking it to your local Household Hazardous Waste Collection event.

For More Information

For more information on gasoline containers and air quality, contact the NHDES Air Resources Division at (603) 271-1370.