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Safety Tips

A five-minute training Series for Pest Management Professionals.

Safety At the Pumps

According to the Petroleum Institute, car fires at the gas pumps are a serious problem. These fires are the result of static electricity. We create static electricity when we walk along, scoot across the seat of our vehicle, and other motions can create even a minute amount of friction. Often we touch enough grounded objects that static electricity discharges are very minute and often unnoticeable. However, at the gas pumps, it takes very little to ignite gasoline fumes.

According to the Petroleum Institute, almost all cases of gas pump fires involved the person getting back in their vehicle while the nozzle was still pumping gas. When they went back to pull the nozzle out, the fire started as a result of static. (Gasoline running through the hose can cause static electricity, which is usually discharged through the operator to ground undetected.). Many of the people involved in such fires were wearing rubber-soled shoes. Rubber-soled shoes provide resistance to electricity flowing through the human body to ground. Out of 150 cases, almost all of them were women, since most men never get back in their vehicle until finished. It is the vapors coming out of the gas that cause the fire when they are exposed to static charges. Eleven percent of the fires occurred before, during or immediately after the gas cap was removed and before fueling began.

- In 19% of these fires, the vehicle was reentered and the nozzle was touched during refueling.
- Do not ever use a cell phone when pumping gas (see auto picture above for what can happen).
- Never get back into your vehicle while fueling the vehicle. If for some reason you must reenter you vehicle while gas is pumping, stay away from the nozzle and touch the doorknob to release any stored static in your system.
- Do not smoke at the pumps.
- Often, there is stored static electricity at the pump and when the pump is touched to the side of the vehicle, static electricity could be present. Therefore, do not start pumping gas until the nozzle is fully seated and any static discharge can take place before gas or fumes are present.

DO NOT SMOKE AT THE PUMPS!