



Petrol Storage and Dispensing - are you complying?

Training is the key to ensure greenkeepers do not unwittingly break the law.

By David Mears.

Petrol is a highly flammable liquid and, because it can emit flammable vapour even at low temperatures, should be treated with the utmost respect! There is always the risk of fire or explosion if it is close to a source of ignition.

The storage and carriage of petrol is a concern for us all and the risks involved should be assessed. Many greenkeepers and groundsmen are often, unwittingly, breaking the law and risking prosecution by storing and collecting petrol from local garages in unauthorised containers and/or in too great a quantity. Apart from this being a dangerous practice, flouting Health and Safety rules, insurance cover would probably be negated too.

It is very difficult to obtain clear advice on the storage and carriage of petrol as it applies to greenkeeping and grounds maintenance, as there are a number of different pieces of relevant legislation. On storage alone there is:

- The Petrol (Consolidation) Act 1928 (PCA)
- The Petroleum-Spirit (Motor Vehicles etc.) Regulations 1929
- The Petroleum-Spirit (Plastic Containers) Regulations 1982

To make matters more difficult, local fire authorities and other official agencies often interpret regulations in different ways and insist on special arrangements for your particular conditions. An example is that, although The Petroleum-Spirit (Motor Vehicles etc.) Regulations 1929, allows up to 275 litres of petrol to be kept in any one storage place without a licence, this can be considerably reduced, particularly if there are perceived hazards (and this is often the case!). The amount of fuel stored in the fuel tanks of all vehicles is included in the total allowed to be stored. An acceptable amount of petrol, in purpose-designed storage, at greenkeeping/turf maintenance premises in "normal" circumstances, would probably be below 100 litres (not including that in vehicle tanks), unless a dedicated and approved tank was installed.

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Plastic containers can be used as well as metal (The Petroleum-Spirit (Plastic Containers) Regulations 1982). For storage in plastic containers without a licence, the containers must:

- Be constructed of suitable materials
- Have a maximum capacity of five litres
- Be designed and constructed properly
- Have appropriate markings or labels

And the quantities that can be stored are:

- Two x five litre containers on any motor vehicle
- Plus two further containers in a safe place
- Plus two more containers in another safe place at least six metres from the first

These quantities are in addition to any petrol kept in metal containers.

The HSE however, in their Carriage of Dangerous Goods manual, under Small Load Exemptions, states that: a typical case would be the carriage of two or three jerrycans in a van. Providing those cans are UN approved, marked UN 1203 and labelled with the flammable diamond, then the only requirements are: Driver awareness training, to carry a 2kg fire extinguisher and stow jerrycans correctly to avoid damage or loss from the vehicle.

All this can lead to confusion to say the least, so what should a responsible club/organisation do?

The following advice is offered:

- Do not allow staff to collect petrol from local garages in anything other than two x five litre purpose designed containers, unless they are taking a special Transit Box, which can hold four x 20 litre jerrycans and should be carried in the back of an open back pick-up or on a trailer.
- Check that your insurance cover allows such collections.
- Ensure that you store petrol responsibly on site. Local authority officers require a Petroleum Licence, which is easily obtained if the Petrol Station is specified. Filled jerrycans should be stored in an appropriate safe container too, e.g. transit box or a Site Safe. Should you need to store and dispense vast quantities of petrol then you should consider installing a special above ground tank such as the Supervault MH.
- Implement driver awareness training and fire drills.
- Place a suitable fire extinguisher adjacent to every petrol storage and refuelling area.
- Place an appropriate spill kit in the same areas. The best spill kits are those produced from sphagnum moss, such as Cansorb, that will reduce the level of harmful vapours from 100% to 10% immediately and are "oil only".
- Place conspicuous notices - "Petroleum Spirit", "Highly Inflammable", "No Smoking" and "Switch Off Engine" - in the above areas.
- Always use a funnel or a proper dispensing spout for refuelling and in a well-ventilated area.
- Staff should be protected from splashes and spills. Gloves should be worn and, ideally, goggles.
- Clean up any spillage immediately, using a spill kit and dispose of all petrol soaked product safely and as hazardous waste.
- Keep ignition sources such as: cigarettes, mobile phones, hand lamps, heaters, welding apparatus etc, away from petrol.

For details of The Petrol Station, transit boxes, petrol storage, spill kits, fire extinguishers, protective clothing, jerrycans and waste services contact your local supplier.



David Mears is Joint Managing Director of Course Care. Course Care operates nationally and supplies all these items/services as well as offering free advice, visit: www.course-care.co.uk for more information.