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FROM : National Wildfire Coordinating Group
REPLY TO : NWCG@nifc.gov
DATE : 08/03/2009
SUBJECT : SAFETY WARNING : Pump Refueling Safety Warning

On July 9, 2009, an accident occurred in which a firefighter was burned while checking the fuel level in a jerry can attached to a portable pump. The firefighter sustained 2nd and 3rd degree burns over 20% of his body, but after weeks of hospitalization and often painful treatment he is expected to make a full recovery.

Everyone uses portable pumps. Although one accident of this nature out of the thousands of hours of pump operations each year can be considered a rare event, the fact that it CAN happen is cause for concern. Please follow these mitigations in order to avoid a similar accident in the future:

- When refueling a pump, ALWAYS shut the pump down first.
- Take care to locate fuel cans as far away from hot engine parts as possible. DO NOT set up a pump so that the exhaust from the pump vents directly onto the fuel can.
- When setting up a pump inside a fuel spill containment berm, take special care to orient the pump so that the muffler is as far away from the fuel can as possible and not blowing exhaust directly onto it. Consider placing the fuel can in a separate berm from the one that contains the pump. Makeshift or temporary berms can be made using Visqueen or other non-permeable materials. Additional berms can be ordered through the Cache system (see "Berm, Mark III" in the cache catalog).
- ALWAYS wear appropriate PPE when refueling any piece of equipment. Eye protection and gloves can prevent severe, life-changing injuries.
- Always open the air vent on top of the jerry can when running a pump. Ensure the can is secured if set up on uneven or sloping ground.
- Remember to STOP, DROP and ROLL if your clothing catches fire. Even Nomex clothing will burn if it is saturated with a flammable liquid like gasoline.
- Review and be familiar with the NWCG *Standards for Burn Injuries* : <http://www.nwcg.gov/general/memos/nwcg-012-2008.pdf> or know and follow your respective agency's burn injury protocols.
- Do not operate a radio or any other portable electronic device such as a cell phone while

engaged in fueling operations. The Safety Precautions section of the Bendix-King radio owner's manual states: "Do not operate the radio in an explosive atmosphere (petroleum fuels, solvents, dust, etc) unless your radio is an intrinsically safe model designed for such use".

- Review the accident report, located at http://www.wildfirelessons.net/documents/Logging_Slash_Fire_Accident_Investigation_Report.pdf . Be sure to discuss lessons learned with your crew and co-workers.
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