

Health and Safety Bulletin

Date: 12th June 2020

Issue: Alcohol-based hand sanitiser – fire risk

Background

Following the outbreak of the Coronavirus covid-19, there was an urgent requirement for additional levels of hand washing to help prevent the spread of the virus. For this reason, hand cleaning sanitiser has been supplied to supplement hand washing with soap and water, at entry points to buildings, and for use by remote-working staff.

The main ingredient is alcohol (at least 60% is necessary to be effective against viruses) and the product is subsequently a highly flammable substance.

We have been made aware of several fire ignition incidents, not associated with CCBC, relating to alcohol-based sanitisers being transported in vehicles igniting due to high temperatures caused by the recent hot weather conditions.

There is also a significant risk of arson from deliberate misuse and ignition of the product, or risk of rapid fire spread from ignition of hand sanitiser within containers

Additionally, exposing the sanitiser to heat, or leaving the cap off, can also affect the active ingredient of the product and effectively lessen its intended protective properties.

Immediate Action:

- To minimise the associated fire risks, avoid storing excess quantities of alcohol-based sanitiser within buildings. Where available, use a designated flammable storage cabinet with integrated bund for bulk storage. If this is not available, use an unoccupied outbuilding for bulk storage. Where neither is available, split quantities of that stored as much as possible into different areas of the building and within locked rooms / cupboards
- Ensure all hand sanitiser is stored out of direct sunlight, (taking into consideration different times of the day), and away from heat or ignition source (including light switches and fittings, naked flames, hot surfaces and spark or heat-generating processes etc.)
- Do not store hand sanitiser in any part of a vehicle that is likely to be exposed to strong sunlight (e.g. use storage pockets in vehicle doors). Do not smoke in a vehicle.
- Carry out regular checks at designated hand sanitiser stations to ensure the sanitiser remains in situ, is not exposed to direct sunlight and the cap is fully closed unless in use.
- Ensure appropriate measures are taken to prevent arson from deliberate misuse and ignition of the product, and vigilant to misuse or theft of sanitiser.
- Instruct all staff, pupils and individuals to avoid excessive use of hand sanitiser, and to rub the sanitiser into the hands until dry – this ensures both effective hand-disinfection and minimises the risk of fire.
- Inform CCBC's Health and Safety Division of any fire ignition incident arising from the use of alcohol-based hand sanitiser by completion of the corporate Accident / Incident Report Form.

Further Information

Further information and general health and safety advice can be obtained from Health and Safety Officers of CCBC's Health and Safety Division – Tel. 01443 86 4072 or e-mail healthandsafety@caerphilly.gov.uk