

## Use caution at the gas pump

According to the Petroleum Equipment Institute, Americans pump gasoline into their cars between 16 and 18 billion times a year generally without incident.

However, within the last few months, 36 ignitions of gasoline vapors during the refueling of motor vehicles at service stations have been verbally reported to PEI. All occurred during exceptionally dry weather. There were no open flames and the engines were turned off. PEI members, oil companies and fire authorities that investigated the cause of these accidents concluded that in 100 percent of the cases, static electricity was the source of ignition.

Customers re-entering their vehicles during refueling is a possible cause of this. An electrostatic charge is generated through friction between clothing and the car seat to such an extent that electrostatic discharges to the vehicle body or to the filling nozzle are possible, especially if the motorist is wearing rubber-soled shoes.

PEI reports that a Midwestern oil company warned of this hazard in a November 24, 1999, memo to its dealers, sellers and jobbers stating that, "a flash fire can result from this discharge if sufficient flammable vapors are present. Therefore, customers should be discouraged from re-entering their vehicles while fueling is underway."

About half of the fires that have been reported to PEI involved the motorist re-entering the vehicle at some point during the refueling process.

Precautions to avoid fire at the gas pump include:

- When fueling, care must be taken to reduce ignition sources. Turn off the engine.
- Do not use cell phones, or hand held radios when fueling.
- Above all, don't smoke.
- Transferring fuel into portable plastic containers or filling containers in plastic truck bed liners can also generate sparks caused by static electricity. Remove portable gas containers from the vehicle and place on the ground when filling.

Gasoline is toxic and can be absorbed through the skin. It can also damage your eyes. To prevent spraying, do not begin transferring fuel until you are sure the nozzle is secure in the tank neck. If fuel is spilled directly onto your skin, wash the affected areas thoroughly with soap and water. If fuel is spilled onto your clothes, remove the clothing items as soon as possible away from ignition sources. Rinse and wash the clothes in a well-ventilated area. Allow the clothes to dry in open air. Fumes from fuel soaked clothes can and have produced explosions in clothing dryers. (Courtesy of the 437th AW Safety Office.)



Staff Sgt. Michael Duhe

### The guy with the cool tie

Pat Simpson, manager of the Charleston Club, reads the name chosen for the club's weekly drawing, held each Friday. As in the past several months, the "lucky winner" of Friday's \$3,900 drawing was nowhere to be found, and the pot will roll over to \$4,000 for tonight's drawing.