

WARNING ON EXPLODING JERRY CANS

This story serves as a sobering reminder to anyone contemplating keeping a jerry can of petrol in their car.

In late 2010, a woman sustained very serious burns when her station wagon blew up in a small outback town in Western Australia. There were some plastic jerry cans in the rear of the vehicle and petrol vapours had escaped in the heat of the day. Not realising this, she had climbed into the vehicle and lit a cigarette, igniting the vapours.

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This was the start of an extremely traumatic experience for the woman. For some unknown reason, the vehicle's central locking system activated. People ran to help but couldn't get her out of the burning car and she was still trapped inside when the jerry cans exploded.

The force of the explosion was so great that the front windscreen landed on the roof of a nearby building and the back windscreen landed on the other side of the highway. The bitumen under the car melted.

The heat forced back the would-be rescuers but they kept encouraging her to get out. Somehow she managed to escape from the vehicle, but not before suffering third degree burns to her legs. Her arms were burned as well and she sustained flash burns to her face. The car parked next to hers also caught alight and blew up.

That night, the Royal Flying Doctor Service flew her to the Burns Unit at Royal Perth Hospital. It took several weeks for her to recover sufficiently to be released from hospital. In the March 2011 issue of the local newspaper in her town, she said that her greatest wish was for others to not go through the same trauma. She and her family have experienced physical, emotional and financial stress as a result of the accident.



Photo courtesy Alison Fox

SIMPLE RULES FOR TRANSPORTING FUEL

- **Do not** carry petrol in the passenger compartment of a vehicle.
- If you cannot transport fuel externally and it must be carried in the car boot, reduce the risk of an explosion by using an **approved fuel container** with a **hermetically sealing lid** complying with Australian Standard AS/NZS 2906:2001 *Fuel containers – Portable – Plastics and metal*.

DID YOU KNOW?

The lower explosive limit (LEL) of petrol is a concentration in air of 1.4% (or 14,000 parts per million). An explosion will occur in the presence of an ignition source if the petrol vapour concentration exceeds 1.4% but is less than 7.6%. It might be expected that such high concentrations would smell very strongly but the Meekatharra incident shows that people are not always alert to the dangers of petrol vapours.

Diesel fuel is much safer and has a much higher flash point than petrol. It will not explode unless the ambient temperature exceeds 60°C.



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FINETUNING SHOTFIRING LICENSING REQUIREMENTS

From 1 November 2011, conditions will be placed on shotfiring licences specifying the types of activity that the licence authorises, such as:

- all surface operations outside of town boundaries;
- all surface operations inside and outside of town boundaries;
- all underground operations except underground coal operations; and
- all underground coal operations.

Also from 1 November 2011, all shotfirer course providers must be a registered training organisation (RTO) accredited to deliver the national units of competency for blasting (RIIBLA).

RENEWING SHOTFIRING LICENCES PRIOR TO 1 NOVEMBER 2011

The process for renewing a shotfiring licence prior to 1 November 2011 remains unchanged. Applicants receive a licence renewal application from the department within three months of the licence expiry date.

Note: Expired licences cannot be renewed.

RENEWING SHOTFIRING LICENCES FROM 1 NOVEMBER 2011

From 1 November 2011, applicants must demonstrate to the Chief Officer that they are competent in the type of

activity for which they want to be licensed. This is done by providing a statement of attainment for the relevant units of competency. For example, a shotfirer intending to perform surface blasting outside of town limits must provide a statement of attainment from an RTO for the surface blasting units of competency (RIIBLA205A, RIIBLA301A and RIIBLA305A).

It is not necessary to arrange refresher training until six months prior to a shotfiring licence expiring as the statement of attainment is only valid for this period of time. Applicants will need to demonstrate to the training provider, through both theoretical and practical assessments, that they are competent in the units of competency for the type of shotfiring they will be conducting. Recognition of prior learning will be part of the assessment.

For all subsequent renewals, shotfiring licence applicants must obtain a statement of attainment from an RTO (within six months of the expiry date of the licence) demonstrating that they have the relevant competencies.

Resources Safety's website contains a list of organisations that deliver shotfirer training. From 1 November 2011, the Department will only accept statements of attainment issued by appropriately accredited training providers.

NEED TO KNOW MORE?

Further information is available in the dangerous goods safety information sheet on requirements for renewal of shotfiring licence, available on the Resources Safety website.