



THE HAZARDS OF CUTTING DANGEROUS GOODS DRUMS

Australians are known for their resourcefulness. For example, many old 44-gallon drums have had a lifetime well beyond their use for transporting and storing fuel.

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Cut the top off a drum, add a hole or two and *voilà*—an incinerator! Cut a drum in half lengthways and the end product could be a water or feed trough for animals. Add a stand and a grid or plate for cooking, and there stands a bush barbie for feeding the hordes. There are some interesting blogs on re-using such drums.

Unfortunately, however, the process of cutting an old drum can be fraught with danger. In a recent safety alert, Resources Safety warned of the hazards associated with using an angle grinder to cut dangerous goods drums if the containers hadn't been thoroughly cleaned.

Two people have died recently in Western Australia and another was seriously injured when using an angle grinder to cut up a 205-litre drum previously used to store dangerous goods. In each incident, sparks from the angle grinder ignited residual flammable liquid inside the drum, causing an explosion.

If you are thinking of buying, selling or re-using a drum previously used for dangerous goods, read Dangerous Goods Safety Bulletin No. 0111 so you know the requirements — and the hazards.

WHAT DO THE NEW ZERO BAC LAWS MEAN FOR DANGEROUS GOODS TRANSPORT?

A crash involving a motor vehicle carrying dangerous goods, such as explosives, can have a severe outcome. Dangerous goods can be highly volatile or noxious and present a danger to people's health and the environment if spilled.

In recognition of these dangers, effective from 1 October 2011, an amendment to the *Road Traffic Act 1974* will make it illegal for drivers of vehicles carrying dangerous goods in bulk to have any alcohol in their bloodstream. The Zero Blood Alcohol Content (Zero BAC) laws have serious consequences for the livelihood of a person convicted of transporting bulk dangerous goods when they have alcohol in their system.

Under the amended law, drivers convicted of having 0.02 g or more of alcohol per 100 mL of blood (i.e. 0.02 per cent BAC) will have their dangerous goods or explosives driver licence cancelled and will not be permitted to apply for a new licence for five years.

A conviction for a BAC of up to 0.02 per cent may also lead to ineligibility for these licences. Once ineligible, a person cannot apply for a new licence for five years.

Dangerous goods and explosives drivers are reminded that they must notify Resources Safety within 14 days if their motor vehicle driver licence is cancelled. Penalties apply for failing to do so.

More information on dangerous goods and explosives drivers licences is available in the safety guidance and FAQs section of the Resources Safety website — check out dangerous goods transport.

You can also contact Resources Safety Customer Services by phone (08 9358 8001) or email (rsdclientservices@dmp.wa.gov.au) for further clarification.

More information on the Zero BAC laws is also available from the Department of Transport at www.transport.wa.gov.au/licensing

Some sobering facts from the Road Safety Council of Western Australia

- If you drink and drive or take drugs and drive, you are more likely to be involved in a crash.
 - Alcohol is currently a factor in almost a third of crashes in which people are killed and seriously injured on Western Australian roads. With a blood alcohol content (BAC) of 0.05, the risk of being involved in a crash doubles.
 - Over the five years to 2010, there were more than 1,200 serious, alcohol-related crashes in Western Australia.
- If these crashes had not happened, more than 300 people would not have died, more than 1,300 people would not have been seriously injured, and the Western Australian community would have saved about \$2.3 billion dollars.
- In 2007, illicit drugs were detected in almost 30 per cent of people fatally injured in crashes in Western Australia.