

ALCOHOL BASED HAND SANITISER – SAFETY ALERT

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Hand Sanitiser

Hand hygiene is a critically important prevention measure in preventing the spread of viruses. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer effectively kills most germs and viruses carried on the hands and is recommended by Public Health England.

Although there have been no incidents reported across MAG there have been several fire related incidents highlighted within H&S media forums involving alcohol-based hand sanitizer. One such incident involved a person touching a metal surface before the liquid evaporated. Due to static electricity, the vapour from the hand sanitiser ignited with an almost invisible flame on both hands.

Cause(s)

Burn injury sustained from hand gel combusting:

Alcohol-based hand sanitizer contains ethyl alcohol, which readily evaporates at room temperature into an ignitable vapor and is considered a flammable liquid. Case studies and concerns have been raised about the use of excessive amounts and subsequent ignition and flash burns caused by smokers' materials, static electricity sparks and when using electrical switches (e.g. lights)

There have also been reports of hand sanitiser being the cause of fires when left in vehicles in the hot weather the UK is currently experiencing:

The alcohol hand sanitiser is becoming heated resulting in flammable vapours being released. These vapours are reaching their 'flashpoint' and then ignite in normal air conditions, setting fire to flammable components within vehicles.

Safety Recommendations:

1. If alcohol-based hand sanitisers are used, make sure all liquid is evaporated before touching any surfaces. (Allow a minimum of 30 seconds for the hand sanitizer to dry)
2. Not to use excessive amounts of hand sanitizer.
3. To not smoke immediately after use.
4. Remove all alcohol-based hand sanitiser products from vehicles when they are not occupied, **do not leave hand sanitiser in un-attended vehicles**.

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Originator: -	Compliance Manager – Operations and Safety	Confirmed By: -	Head of Fire and Airfield Operations
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