



Washington State Patrol • State Fire Marshal Chad Cross

*** For Immediate Release***

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Government and Media Relations

March 23, 2026

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Flammable and Combustible Liquid Safety

Olympia— Spontaneous combustion is a dangerous and often underestimated fire hazard that occurs when materials self-ignite without an external flame or spark. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), spontaneous ignition happens due to a buildup of heat from chemical reactions, particularly oxidation, which leads to ignition when the heat cannot dissipate efficiently. Oil-based paints, stains, and varnishes are often used for home improvement projects, and if not cleaned or disposed of properly can increase the risk of combustion. The NFPA reports that on average, 1,700 home fires per year are caused by instances of spontaneous combustion from chemical reactions within flammable and combustible liquids, with rags being responsible for at least 900 of the incidents.

The SFMO encourages you to handle flammable and combustible liquids carefully, by following these safety tips:

- Storing any hazardous liquids far from any source of heat, sparks, or flame. This includes electric motors, which can spark when they switch on or off.
- Storing gasoline in a tightly capped container that has been listed, labeled, and approved for gasoline.
- Keeping oil-based paints and flammable and combustible solvents in their original containers and tightly capped.
- Fueling any small motor, such as a lawnmower, snow blower, or string trimmer, only after the motor has cooled prior to adding fuel.
- Never dispensing gasoline into a portable container while it is located inside a vehicle or in the bed of a truck.
- Not smoking when working with any of these liquids.
- Not using these types of liquids as a cleaner.
- Placing contaminated rags in a metal container when dried and storing it in a cool, dark place.

For more information, contact the State Fire Marshal's Office at 360-596-3904.

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