

# PF Olsen Toolbox Safety Alert 46

<b>Date:</b> May 2022	<b>Focus Group:</b> Petrol Powered Equipment Users
<b>Topic:</b> Petrol Powered Equipment	<b>Issued by:</b> Nic Steens

**Background and Incident:** An experienced chainsaw operator was refuelling his chainsaw and didn't screw the fuel cap back into the chainsaw properly. Some fuel leaked onto his clothing. He then lit a cigarette and the fuel and his clothing caught fire.

**Injury Details:** A minor face burn, superficial burns to left arm and torso, burnt clothing.

**Risk Awareness:** Petrol is highly flammable and poisonous. Because it is so easily ignited, you must handle and treat it with great care. Generally, all of the spilled petrol will ignite causing secondary fuels e.g. polypropylene clothing to catch fire or melt very quickly. The resulting fire and flames can cause serious even fatal burns.

**Safe Behaviours:** While not banning smoking at work, our PF Olsen General Safety Rules state "Smoking is not permitted when handling fuels." The Approved Code of Practice at **4.1.6** doesn't go too much further but does state "When refuelling portable equipment the following shall be adhered to: (1) No smoking, (2) Stop the motor, and (3) Move at least three metres away from the refuelling area before restarting."

**WorkSafe NZ** has published guidance for the [safe handling/management of petrol](#) – some of the 12 points mentioned in the link are listed below (**please review the rest**):

1. Double-check that fuel caps are done up and never smoke within 20 metres of petrol.
2. Shut down the engine and allow time for it to cool, before refuelling.
3. If clothing is splashed with fuel, change it immediately.

**For Site Manager:**

Print and complete the following:

1. Discuss with employees/operators:
2. Place on site notice board or in file:

**Site Manager:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** / /  
(initials)

