

Shock at the Pumps

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Press Release

Geauga County Auditor Tracy A. Jemison says the price of gas is not the only shock you can receive at the pump. According to sources at the American Petroleum Institute and the Petroleum Equipment Institute a static electrical flash fire at the pumps might be the other shock. Weather conditions at this time of year in Geauga County with cool dry air, are typical climate conditions for static build up. About 70% of static fires occur during the winter months, November through March.

The greatest chance of this happening is when motorists re-enter their vehicle during fueling. While sitting in the car electrostatic charges are generated on the car seat and the persons body, due to contact and movement between the clothes and the seat. When the motorist leaves the vehicle their body voltage has been increased. As they reach for the gas nozzle a static discharge may take place, potentially causing a flash fire, with gasoline vapors.

Auditor Jemison says "the average fill-up takes only two minutes, but we know the temptation to get back in the car when it is cold and windy or maybe to talk to a child, is hard to resist. So if you must re-enter your car, the experts suggest discharging the static buildup by touching a metal part of the vehicle, such as the door with a bare hand as you exit the car and before returning to the fueling point".

Another scenario where this happens is with the dispensing of gasoline into containers. Only use approved portable containers and always place them on the ground when refueling to avoid the possibility of static flash fires. These containers should never be filled while inside a car trunk, the bed of a pickup truck, especially with a liner, or on the floor of a trailer.

If a static flash fire occurs during refueling, leave the nozzle in the vehicle and back away. Notify the store employee so all dispensing devices can be shut down. If you happen to be at an unattended facility, use the emergency shut-off button to shut down the pumps and the emergency intercom or phone to contact help.

Other safety refueling tips according to Auditor Jemison that will help keep you and your family safe at the pumps are:

- Turn **OFF** your vehicle engine while refueling.
- **DO NOT** smoke, light matches or lighters.
- **DO NOT** over-fill or top-off your vehicle tank.
- Fill container no more than 95% full to allow for expansion.
- Place cap tightly on the container after filling.
- **DO NOT** re-enter your vehicle during refueling.
- **DO NOT** operate cell phone while fueling.
- NEVER allow children to operate the pump.
- Use only the hold-open latch on the gasoline pump. NEVER jam or force the latch open by using some other object such as the gas cap.

If you are interested in gaining more information on this subject Auditor Jemison suggests going to either institutes websites at <http://www.api.org/> or <http://www.pei.org/static>.