



Ship Type: All Trade Area: Worldwide

Bulletin 251 - 06/02 - Mobile Phone Fuel Ignition - Worldwide

A major oil producer / shipper has recently issued a warning about mobile phones – they report three incidents where mobile telephones have ignited fumes whilst being answered / used during motor car refuelling operations.

In the first case, the phone was on the car's boot lid when it rang. The resulting fire destroyed the car and the pump.

In the second, an individual suffered burns to the face when fumes ignited as he answered a call during refuelling.

In the third case, the person suffered burns to the thigh and groin as fumes ignited when the phone, which was in his pocket, rang while refuelling his car.

It is a popular misconception that mobile telephones cannot ignite gas/petrol fumes. It is believed that the more modern phones – those that illuminate when switched on and ring – release enough energy to provide the spark required for ignition. Mobile phones are not intrinsically safe.

Although these incidents are all related to cars in gas / petrol stations, there is similar cause for concern when mobile phones are being used on board ship – especially when volatile cargoes are being carried. Members are recommended to make it clear that mobile telephones should not be switched on or used near potentially flammable cargo or fuel vapours.

Source of Information: Phil Nichols, Thomas Miller, London