

Educating Staff on Alcohol Based Hand Sanitizers (ABHS) Use – Flammability

It is important to note the following:

- Verify all incidents before sharing.
- The hand sanitizer requirement for SA is a minimum of 70% alcohol content. (OHS Directive)
- Alcohol Based Hand Sanitizers (ABHS) are flammable. ABHS generally contain ethyl alcohol, which readily evaporates at room temperature into an ignitable vapor. (CDC)
- Labelling should cover: Flammable labelling, Directions for use, Precautions, First Aid etc. as per the Hazardous Chemical Substances Regulations.
- “Although the incidence of fires related to ABHS is very low, it is vital that ABHS is stored safely and that bulk dispensers are installed and maintained correctly.” (CDC)
- “The alcohol content in the sanitizers is flammable and has caused burns in connection with static and arcing electricity.” (Office of the Fire state Marshal – Kansas) – issued March 2020

The following is recommended:

- The risk associated with ABHS are included in your risk assessment.
- Refer to the product Safety Data Sheet for more information of the risk associated with the product you are using.
- Staff should be educated on the risks of ABHS. Not just flammability, but to keep away from children, accidental ingestion etc.
- Staff should be educated on how to use the ABHS – e.g. Once applied, the hands should be rubbed for 30 seconds or until the liquid evaporates.
- If you are dispensing the hand sanitizer from bulk containers into small containers – conduct a risk assessment - consider ventilation, need for PPE, etc. for that activity, the smaller containers need to be properly labelled.
- There is the NFPA 101 Life Safety Code Requirements for the use of ABHS Dispensers – talks to positioning of dispensers, etc. – additional guidance.
- Be prepared to dispel fake news - if you have used hand sanitizer and it has evaporated and a few minutes later you decided to cook, your hands will not catch alight!