

Use of Solid Alcohol Fuel Gel (a.k.a Sterno) Guideline

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Applies To: All University personnel as well as all contractors, vendors, and visitors who handle or use solid alcohol fuel gel on University of Michigan property.

Electric chafing dishes are the preferred method for food warming whenever practical; however, in the event that use of electrical chaffing dishes is not possible, this guideline establishes operating procedures for the use of solid alcohol fuel gel (Sterno) on University of Michigan premises. This guideline is intended to provide precautionary measures to prevent accidental fires that might result from the improper use of solid alcohol fuel gel. This guideline is for all University personnel as well as all contractors, vendors, and visitors who handle or use solid alcohol fuel gel on University of Michigan property. Solid alcohol fuel gel may be used for food warming on campus as long as the following guidelines are adhered to:

- A person trained in the use of portable fire extinguishers must be present any time solid alcohol fuel gel is used.
- A sealed/tagged "ABC" multi-purpose fire extinguisher must be available in the immediate area.
- Under no circumstance will lit fuel containers be left unattended.
- Table covers must be made of fire-resistant material.
- No combustible materials (paper, baskets, table decorations, cut vegetation, etc.) may be placed within 12 inches of a lit fuel container.
- Solid alcohol fuel gel may not be used indoors in any areas that do not have automatic sprinkler protection.
- Solid alcohol fuel gel, open flames, or any other devices emitting flame are not permitted inside of or within twenty feet of tents or canopies unless approved by EHS Fire Safety.
- Solid alcohol fuel gel is not approved for use outdoors anytime wind speed exceeds 15 miles per hour.
- Any unintended/unwanted fires, regardless of magnitude, must be immediately reported to the Department of Public Safety and Security by calling 911 or 734-763-1131.

When Working with Solid Alcohol Gel Fuel:

- Use CAUTION when handling OPEN FLAME products.
- Use a blunt object, such as a spoon, to pry off the lid.
- Cup hand over lid when opening the can.
- Remove excess gel from the lid if it is being used as a regulator.
- Wash fuel residue from hands.
- Place the can underneath the chafing dish or beverage urn before lighting.
- Make sure the cans are placed securely in the equipment.
- Use a long handled match or butane lighter to light the can.
- Use a snuffer paddle, regulator or saucer to extinguish the flame.
- Wait until the can is cool before touching.
- Extinguished and cooled containers must be disposed of in non-combustible containers

When Working with Solid Alcohol Gel Fuel, DO NOT:

- Use a sharp knife to pry off the lid



- Use a lit can to light another can
- Carry lit cans
- Carry chafing dishes or beverage urns with lit cans
- Touch cans while still hot
- Allow loose clothing, napkins or tablecloths near flame
- Allow hair to fall near flame
- Use hands to extinguish flame
- Blow out flame of Sterno type gel fuel to extinguish.
- Dispose of spent fuel containers unless the flames are completely extinguished and they are cool to the touch.

Quantities of solid alcohol fuel gel not exceeding 5 gallons (A single case of 72 each 8.25 oz. cans) shall be stored in closed containers in a cool dry place (40-120°F) away from sources of heat or open flame.

Any questions regarding storage of solid alcohol fuel gel should be directed to EHS Fire Safety at EHS-FireSafety@umich.edu or 734- 647-1143 to determine appropriate requirements.

For more information about Sterno type gel fuel education and safety, please refer to the [Sterno Training Center](#)