

# Loss Prevention Safety Tip



Loss Prevention  
Program

By Red River Mutual

## OILY RAG & FLAMMABLE LIQUID SAFETY

Oil-based paints, stains and varnishes are often used for home improvement projects and it's common to use rags to wipe up spills or clean brushes. However, if they're not stored or disposed of properly, wet rags can auto-ignite and start a fire in your home. The same is true of the flammable liquids themselves.



### How can oily rags start a fire?

The oils commonly used in oil-based paints and stains release heat as they dry. If they're thrown into a pile, oxygen is trapped underneath. The combination of heat, oxygen and the cloth can lead to spontaneous combustion, which results in a fire that could destroy your home.

### How can flammable liquids start a fire?

Vapours from flammable and combustible liquids can ignite, causing a fire. There are many commonly used flammable liquids including gasoline, paints and laquers. Examples of combustible liquids include paint thinner, stains and kerosene.

### How to store & dispose of oily rags

- Never leave wet rags in a pile. Used rags should be spread out in a safe area to dry and weighed down so they don't blow away.
- Store the dry rags in ULC certified, non-combustible metal container with a self-closing lid. Fill the container with a water and detergent solution which will break down the oils.
- Keep containers of oily rags in a cool place out of direct sunlight, and away from any heat sources. Check with your city or municipality for disposal instructions.
- Follow the manufacturer's recommendations. Since manufacturers use different oils in their products, it's important to follow their warnings and disposal instructions.

### Flammable & combustible liquid safety

- Flammable and combustible liquids should not be used near an open flame. Do not smoke when working with these liquids.
- If you spill liquids on your clothing, remove the items and dry them outdoors. Once dry, the clothing can be laundered.
- Keep liquids in their original containers with lids or caps tightly sealed. Never store liquids in glass containers.
- Never use gasoline as a cleaner or to break down grease.
- Store gasoline only in a container that is designed for that purpose and keep the container tightly capped when not in use.
- Never store gasoline containers in an occupied building. Gasoline should be stored in a detached garage, shed or outdoors, away from any heat sources.

Source: National Fire Protection Association

**See more loss prevention tips at [www.preventingloss.com](http://www.preventingloss.com)**

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