

Important Safety Advice

A very serious incident occurred at a UK Model Engineering Club track. Fuel leaking from a locomotive at a steaming bay ignited, and was doused from a nearby boiler water container. A continuing burning leak was doused from a similar container assumed to contain water, but in fact alcohol, resulting in a fireball. An air ambulance brought a burns unit doctor to the scene and three victims with serious burns were taken to hospital. While waiting conclusions of official investigations, we can take immediate common-sense actions to avoid a repeat.

A contributory cause of the accident was the presence to hand at the steaming bay of similarly large-volume containers of alcohol fuel and boiler water. Lack of visual and physical separation led to an error during an emergency situation. This storage practice presents a significant hazard.

Local Groups with display layouts are very aware of the hazards of using liquid fuels at exhibitions and have a practice of Risk Assessments and Method Statements to provide assurance to exhibition organisers. Examples of these documents are available on our website. Model Engineering Society tracks are the responsibility of the relevant club, though many follow our safety practices.

Based, in part, on reports by those involved in the incident, the Association recommends that members take the following sensible precautions at their own tracks, and at external events they attend:

- **Alcohol fuel must be coloured.**
- **Alcohol fuel should only be brought to meetings in the original, labelled, retail container. These containers are officially approved for both transport and storage.**
- **No more alcohol fuel should be brought to a meeting than is required for the anticipated running at the event - typically 1 litre or less.**
- **Retail fuel containers should be placed in a cool, secure storage area; as remote as possible from the open flames at the steaming bay and trackside; and also, from groups of operators and spectators. No other material - such as boiler water - should be permitted at this location.**
- **Alcohol to be transferred into locomotives should be loaded, in the open air, into fuelling containers that contain no more than 500ml. Transfer should be done away from the storage area; and remote from the steaming bay and trackside where open flames are present.**
- **These fuelling containers - such as bottles and syringes - should be transparent to show the coloured fuel contents, and bottles should have a cap or positive closure so that fuel cannot escape when not in use.**
- **Fuelling containers should be clearly marked with the contents; and where size permits the hazard should be identified with flame pictogram labels and/or black and yellow warning tape:**



- **Water in large spray bottles or buckets should be placed at the steaming bay and convenient trackside locations to douse small leaks and fires; reducing track damage and further spread.**
- **A CO2 extinguisher and/or fire blanket should be available to extinguish larger fires.**
- **Note: These requirements are sensible advice for Members' private events, but similar requirements will be mandatory at the 75th Anniversary Show at Bicester, future G1MRA Spring Shows, and events covered by G1MRA insurance.**

We are in contact with the ME Society where the accident occurred, will monitor official recommendations, and publish updated safety advice in the NL&J and on the G1MRA Website.