

SAFETY ALERT

373 - Working at Service Stations - Hazardous Areas and Ignition Sources

Background

During routine grounds maintenance at a service station, a technician inadvertently entered a hazardous area while operating a brush cutter alongside the public easement/footpath. The work was being undertaken on a narrow grass strip adjacent to the footpath, rather than within the garden bed (Service Station Site) itself.

The same worker was also observed using their backpack blower on the forecourt. Forecourts are designated hazardous areas and unless hot works permits and approvals are in place, no petrol, diesel or battery powered equipment is permitted to be operated in these areas.

What happened

- The grassed area being maintained runs along the front of a garden bed on the public verge.
- A diesel bowser is located within the front garden bed near the price board.
- At its closest point, the work area is approximately 3.3m from the bowser, placing it within the 4-metre hazardous area exclusion zone.
- Mechanical equipment was being used within this exclusion zone without the isolation of the bowser.
- No injury or ignition event occurred but this incident has brought us into disrepute with a valued customer.



Safety Issues

Fuel sites contain classified hazardous areas where ignition sources must be strictly controlled.

The use of powered equipment (e.g. brush cutters, blowers) in these areas introduces ignition risks, including:

- Heat, friction or sparks generated by equipment
- Contact with hard surfaces causing sparks
- Equipment malfunction or debris projection

These risks differ from that of public interface, refuelling vehicles, and should not be confused.

Expected Process

- 1. Forecourts are hazardous areas** – No petrol, diesel, or battery-powered equipment is to be used without approved permits.
- 2. Identify hazards before starting work** – Complete a work clearance/checklist with the site representative.
- 3. Confirm infrastructure locations** – Identify all hazardous areas and exclusion zones.
- 4. Use safer alternatives** – Where elimination is not possible, use non-powered methods (e.g. hand tools).

Programmed will continue to work with customers to **eliminate risk at source**, including converting areas to low-maintenance surfaces (e.g. rock, mulch, concrete or hardstand).

Programmed will work with the customer in areas where the risk can be eliminated such as converting areas to rock, mulch, hardstand, non-growth surfaces (concrete).

RECOMMENDED WAYS TO CONTROL RISK

Plan the job – not just the task

Before starting work, always ask:

- Is this a hazardous area?
- Am I about to use prohibited equipment?
- Can this task be completed in a safer way?

Key Requirements:

- No petrol, diesel, or battery-powered equipment to be used on forecourts without permits
- All workers must complete the required checklist and review hazardous areas prior to commencing work
- Maintain strict adherence to exclusion zones at all times

Ensure that all workers have completed the checklist and reviewed hazardous areas prior to commencing.

Issue date: 25/6/2026

Report all incidents and near misses

Please display on Safety Noticeboards and raise this matter at the next Toolbox Talk or Safety Meeting.