

Because of the important role hand sanitizers play in efforts to minimize COVID-19 risk, the use and supply of these products are much higher. Many employees are also carrying these products around with them – in personal vehicles, company vehicles, purses, lunch pails, etc. It is important to know the risks of improper storage of this alcohol-based material.

Experts advise against leaving alcohol-based hand sanitizer in your car for long periods of time because it not only reduces its effectiveness, it may also be a fire risk. In order for the hand sanitizer to be effective, its alcohol percentage must be over 60%. If stored in a car for long periods of time with extended exposure to high temperatures, the alcohol in the hand sanitizer will eventually evaporate, causing it to lose its efficacy. Keeping it in the car for short periods of time such as when running errands is fine, but it should not be left in the car for long durations.

Additionally, there is a potential fire risk to storing hand sanitizer in your car. In extreme heat, it can ignite due to its high alcohol content.

The following is a summary of a vehicle fire originating from a container of alcohol-based sanitizer left in a door compartment.

Employee parked the truck and locked the vehicle. After about 30 minutes, the employee noticed something wrong with the truck, as they noticed the glass with a change in its appearance. As the individual approached, they noticed that there had been a fire at the driver's door, in the same place where there was a container of alcohol hand sanitizer (about 250ml) that was on the door. The fire department was called, but the fire extinguished itself, probably due to the absence of oxygen in the environment.

Please remember to never leave hand sanitizer in any environment which can see elevated temperatures, such as inside a vehicle, for extended periods of time. This becomes increasingly important as the temperature outside continues to rise.

Understanding the situation which led to this incident can help us all ensure this does not happen to us or a loved one. Please take this knowledge home with you and share it with your family and friends.

