

Combustion fires can result from improper disposal of rags or towels soaked in a solvent. Oil-based paints, stains, and varnishes are often used for building improvements or shop projects. It is common to use rags to wipe up spills or clean brushes when working with these materials. However, rags soaked in these substances can ignite on their own and can start fires if they are not handled carefully.

### Did you know?

- An estimated average of 14,070 fires are caused every year by spontaneous combustion or chemical reaction.
- Most spontaneous combustion occurs between 6 pm and midnight.

### How can rags start a fire?

- The oils commonly used in oil-based paints and stains release heat as they dry. If the heat is not released into the air, it builds up and can spontaneously combust, causing a fire.

### What is the solution?

- Oily waste cans are an effective way to block external fire from being transmitted to the contents of the can while the lid is open, because internal fire is immediately snuffed out when the lid closes.
- A closed lid robs oxygen from any internal flame that could occur as a result of spontaneous combustion.
- To help prevent temperature build-up, the cans are designed with the bottom elevated above the floor so that there is air circulation to help dissipate heat.

