

Cellulose Nitrate Film

Any cellulose nitrate film around now will be very old and was the plastic commonly used for film-base photographic materials manufactured up to the 1950's. The fire risk with this type of film increases as it ages.

- It can start to decompose and become unstable at low temperatures giving off large quantities of poisonous gases which may cause an explosion. Warmth and moisture accelerate its decomposition.
- It catches fire very easily and once alight is difficult to extinguish. Fires involving cellulose nitrate burn extremely quickly with a hot, intense flame and the smoke is particularly toxic containing large quantities of poisonous gases.
- Unlike other flammable materials it does not need the oxygen in the air to keep burning, immersing burning film in water may not extinguish the fire and it could actually increase the amount of smoke produced.
- On no account should cellulose nitrate film be sent by post, carried on public transport or disposed of as refuse.

In the first instance the Responsible Person should contact their Fire Risk Assessor if they have any concerns regarding the storage of this type of material.



HSE - [The dangers of cellulose nitrate film](#)