



Spills & Spill Response

Spills of oil, chemicals and other substances that could cause injury or damage to the environment should be prevented. If a spill does occur, it should be attended to as quickly as possible to minimise impacts that may be caused. All businesses should have emergency response procedures in place and spill kits for these situations.

Spills can be avoided by keeping containers tightly sealed, regularly inspecting containers for leaks, following proper handling methods, using drip trays and bunding storage areas.

If a spill does occur it must be quickly contained to prevent it reaching stormwater, the sewer or causing other contamination. It is important to note that members of the public are able to report substances running off your site by calling the EPA Pollution Watch Line. This could result in the EPA reviewing your site and its operations which could then result in an EPA notice or fine.

Containment Methods for Spills Include:

- Containment booms (disposed of as prescribed industrial waste).
- Mops for small spills (water must be disposed of using a triple interceptor).
- Rags for wiping hands, parts or spot spills (must be disposed of as prescribed industrial waste).
- Special absorbent pads (must be disposed of as prescribed industrial waste).
- Approved absorbent materials (must be disposed of as prescribed industrial waste).
- Special absorbent pellets, granules (must be disposed of as prescribed industrial waste).

In all cases you should refer to each spill substances' Material Safety Data Sheet for information on proper clean up measures. If you do not have the relevant MSDS contact the supplier immediately.

When a Spill Occurs

- Use drip trays to collect fluids leaking from machines or processes.
- Keep protective clothing and spill equipment within easy reach.
- Do not use a hose to wash spills into stormwater drains or the sewer.
- Follow the MSDS clean up and disposal instructions carefully.

- Try to minimise the amount of material used to absorb the spill. This will reduce the amount of total waste that needs to be disposed of.
- Always use dry cleaning methods in preference to wet methods.
- Clean up material saturated with oil must be disposed of as Prescribed Industrial Waste i.e. oil rags, absorbents.
- Be prepared for a potential spill by training staff on how to safely respond if one does occur.

Spill Kits

Spill kits are effective and environmentally friendly tools used to clean up hazardous or toxic spills that occur in the workplace.

There are **two** main spill kits used in the automotive industry; Hazchem (Hazardous Chemical) spill kits and Hydrocarbon (Fuel and Oil) spill kits. These both have different contents due to their differing uses.

1. Hazchem spill kits are used for the safe and efficient clean up of dangerous chemical spills such as acid and Prescribed Industrial Waste. They are ideal for panel beaters, spray painters and workshops that use hazardous chemicals. They generally contain:

- Land booms for perimeter containment,
- Absorbent mats,
- Chemical absorbent powder or granules,
- Personal protective equipment such as disposable overalls, acid resistance gloves, safety glasses and respirator with valve,
- Waste disposal bags,
- Spill cleanup instructions.

2. Hydrocarbon spill kits are used to clean up fuel, oil, petroleum and other similar liquids. Service stations, mechanical workshops and panel beaters would all benefit from owning one of these kits which generally contain:

- Land booms for perimeter containment,
- Absorbent polypropylene mats,
- Absorbent material,
- Personal protective equipment,
- Waste disposal bags,
- Spill cleanup instructions.

Refer to the VACC Environment Product & Services Guide for spill kit providers.

Please Note

Kitty litter and sawdust are not appropriate absorbent materials for soaking up spills. Using these will form a toxic sludge when thrown into general waste bins. This can lead to contamination of soil and groundwater. There are a number of different companies that sell spill kits. Some offer biodegradable or eco-friendly absorbent materials that can be used many times and are safer to dispose of.

Spill Response Planning

An effective spill response plan is critical in a workplace that uses large amounts of chemicals in their operations. The following should be followed:

1. Obtain and review Material Safety Data Sheets for all the chemicals you have on site. Remember to keep the MSDSs in an accessible place for all staff to access. The MSDSs will let you know how to clean up chemicals in the event of a spill.
2. Purchase appropriate spill kits and sufficient amounts of control materials to contain any spills which could eventuate. Train staff on how to use these.
3. Acquire recommended Personal Protection Equipment (the MSDSs will tell you which PPE is required).
4. Place the spill kit and PPE in an accessible location and ensure that it is appropriately signed.
5. Develop a spill response plan for your business.
6. Discuss the spill response plan with all employees and new employees.

Spill Response Actions

In the event of a chemical spill the following general guidelines can be followed:

1. Immediately alert the occupants and the manager in the affected area.
2. If necessary evacuate the area.
3. If there is a fire or medical attention is needed dial emergency services on 000.
4. Determine the extent and type of spill.
5. Tend to people that may be contaminated. Contaminated clothing must be removed immediately and the skin flushed with water for no less than 15 minutes. Check the spilled substances MSDS and undertake appropriate first aid as described.
6. If a flammable substance is spilt immediately warn all occupants, control the sources of ignition and ventilate the area.
7. Apply Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as appropriate to the hazards (refer to the MSDS).
8. Consider the need for a respirator mask.

Environmental Guidelines



9. Protect all drains which lead to stormwater.
10. Contain and clean up the spill using a spill kit or appropriate materials, and dispose of these as Prescribed Industrial Waste.

Further Information



Environment Protection Authority Victoria
Phone: (03) 9695 2722
www.epa.vic.gov.au

© VACC Green Stamp Plus
Issue date: November 2010

**Note: This Good Practice Guideline is not a complete statement of law relevant to this topic.
Further legal advice must be sought if complete information is required.**