



Weekly Safety Meeting

Your Safety Is Our Business®

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Handling Chemical Spills

Unplanned release of a chemical can have devastating effects. Skin and eye burns, damage to the lungs, fire and explosion, corrosive damage to materials, pollution of air, soil, and water, and danger to the public are just some of the possible consequences of a chemical spill.

Chemical spills can be in the form of liquids, solids such as pellets, gases, or vapors. They can be flammable (quick to burn or explode), corrosive (damaging to human tissue or other materials), or toxic (poisonous to humans and other living things).

The time to deal with a chemical spill is long before it happens by rehearsing what you will do and obtaining the supplies you will need for self-protection and clean-up.

First, you need to learn all you can about the chemicals used and stored in your work area. What are the hazards? What would happen if the chemical were exposed to air, oxygen, a spark, water, or even motion? Is the chemical corrosive, causing burns to human tissue?

If breathed in, could it damage the respiratory system, cause unconsciousness or death? Are there possible long-term effects, such as cancer, from chemical exposure? You will get this type of information from your training, the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS), and/or Safety Data Sheets (SDS), and container labelling.

Here are some basic procedures for dealing with a spill:

- Alert people in the area of the spill.
- Call the appropriate emergency numbers, which should be posted at each telephone.
- Attend to any injured persons, removing them from exposure and getting to a safety shower if necessary.
- Depending on the nature of the chemical, you might need to open windows and doors to provide ventilation, close up the affected area to contain spills, or turn off heat and other ignition sources.
- If you are trained and authorized, use the appropriate materials to absorb or contain the spill. For instance, you might have kits to neutralize spilled acids or bases. For other chemicals, you could be required to sprinkle an absorbent litter on a spill or surround the spill with a dam.

Do not attempt cleanup under these circumstances:

- You don't know what the spilled material is.
- You don't have the necessary protection or the right equipment to do the job.
- The spill is too large.
- The spill is highly toxic.
- You feel symptoms of exposure.
- Learn your part in the spill response plan for your department. If there is no such plan, ask your supervisor to work with the management and safety department in establishing one.



Preventing Spills:

- Eliminate clutter.
- Know proper work practices for biological or chemical materials you use.
- Use unbreakable secondary containers.
- Store chemicals properly.
- Dispose of waste and excess chemicals in a timely manner.

Follow procedures, keep safety in mind!!

