

Chemical Spill Response Procedure

SAMPLE

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Purpose

This Chemical Spill Response Procedure sets out the minimum requirements for preventing, responding to and recovering from chemical spills at [Company Name] workplaces. It is designed to protect workers, contractors, visitors, the public and the environment from harm arising from spills of hazardous chemicals used in manufacturing and production, commercial cleaning, farming and agriculture, pest control, and transport and logistics operations.

This procedure supports [Company Name]'s Work Health and Safety (WHS) management system and must be read in conjunction with relevant Safe Work Method Statements (SWMS), Safe Operating Procedures (SOPs), Safety Data Sheets (SDS) and emergency plans.

Scope

This procedure applies to:

- All [Company Name] workplaces, including factories, warehouses, workshops, depots, farms, sheds, yards, vehicles and mobile plant
- All workers, including full-time, part-time, casual, labour hire, contractors, sub-contractors, apprentices and trainees
- All hazardous chemicals, dangerous goods, fuels, pesticides, fertilisers, cleaning agents, solvents, gases and other substances that may be spilled during storage, handling, use, transfer or transport

This procedure covers:

- Planning and preparedness for chemical spills
- Immediate response to minor and major spills
- Decontamination, waste disposal and environmental protection
- Incident reporting, investigation and review

It does not replace specific emergency response plans for major incidents (e.g. large fuel tank failures, major pesticide releases) but must align with them.

Definitions

Chemical spill

Any unplanned release of a hazardous chemical (solid, liquid or gas) that escapes its normal containment (e.g. container, tank, pipe, process equipment, vehicle fuel system) and has the potential to cause harm to people, property or the environment.

Minor spill

A small, localised chemical spill that:

- Can be safely managed by trained workers using on-site spill kits and PPE
- Does not pose an immediate threat beyond the immediate area
- Does not require assistance from emergency services

Examples:

- A 5 L container of cleaning chemical knocked over in a commercial kitchen
- A small hydraulic oil leak from a forklift in a warehouse
- Limited pesticide spill from a knapsack sprayer on a farm track

Major spill

A chemical spill that:

- Poses an immediate danger to life, health or the environment
- Involves highly toxic, volatile, flammable or reactive substances
- Cannot be controlled with available resources and spill kits
- Requires evacuation or assistance from emergency services

Examples:

- A damaged bulk pesticide container in an agricultural chemical store
- A rollover of a tanker carrying dangerous goods on a public road
- A major fuel leak from a transport depot or manufacturing facility

Hazardous chemical

Any substance, mixture or article that satisfies the criteria for a hazard class in the Globally Harmonised System (GHS) and is classified as a hazardous chemical under WHS legislation.

SDS (Safety Data Sheet)

A document provided by the chemical manufacturer or importer that contains detailed information about a hazardous chemical, including hazards, safe handling, storage, emergency response and first aid.

Spill kit

A pre-assembled container of equipment and materials used to control and clean up chemical spills, such as absorbents, neutralisers, booms, drain covers, tools, bags and PPE.

Roles and Responsibilities

Officers (e.g. Directors, Senior Management)

Officers must exercise due diligence to ensure [Company Name] complies with its WHS duties in relation to chemical spill management. This includes ensuring that:

- Adequate resources are provided for spill prevention and response (spill kits, PPE, training, signage, bunding)
- Chemical storage and handling areas are designed and maintained to minimise spill risks

- Emergency response plans and this procedure are implemented and reviewed
- Incident reports and investigations relating to chemical spills are reviewed and acted upon

Managers and Supervisors

Managers and supervisors must ensure this procedure is implemented in their area of control by:

- Identifying all hazardous chemicals used and stored, including in vehicles and mobile plant
- Ensuring current SDS are readily available and accessible to workers
- Ensuring appropriate spill kits are provided, correctly located, clearly signposted and maintained
- Ensuring workers are trained and competent in chemical spill response and use of PPE
- Enforcing safe work procedures for chemical handling, transfer, decanting and transport
- Ensuring emergency contact details and evacuation routes are clearly displayed
- Reporting and investigating chemical spills and implementing corrective actions

Workers

All workers must:

- Follow this procedure and associated SWMS/SOPs
- Attend spill response and chemical safety training as required
- Use chemicals only as instructed and in accordance with SDS
- Immediately report any spill, leak or near miss to their supervisor
- Never attempt to clean up a spill that is beyond their training, PPE or resources
- Use spill kits and PPE correctly when authorised to respond
- Participate in incident investigations and corrective actions

Contractors and Visitors

Contractors and visitors must:

- Comply with [Company Name] site induction requirements, including emergency and spill response information
- Immediately notify [Company Name] representatives of any spill or leak they cause or observe