

Stay safe: spills

By safely disposing of your liquid waste, you are helping to protect the natural environment. But it's important to protect yourself and others too.

Spills in the workplace can have far-reaching consequences on the health of employees as well as the environment.

If a spill occurs, action must be taken immediately to prevent injury and minimise the potential damage to other materials and facilities.

Failure to deal with a spill effectively can result in financial penalties, not to mention risking your company's reputation.

Spills can occur in many ways including loading and unloading; leaking pipes, containers and valves; poor storage of liquid; a lack of maintenance of plant and equipment.

It is important therefore to have procedures in place to prevent spills happening in the first place and that they are controlled quickly and safely if they do occur.

Spill prevention

It's always better to prevent spills from happening. You can do this by:

- Having safe storage areas
- Using dedicated bays for loading and off-loading
- Carrying out risk assessments and preparing method statements
- Training your employees
- Maintaining plant and equipment
- Following site rules and being aware of who to contact in case of an emergency.

Common causes of spills when loading or unloading:

- Poor maintenance of vehicles and plant resulting in leaking oil and fluid
- Valves not fully operational
- Damaged couplings and hoses
- Poor or damaged seal rings
- Failing to replace protective caps
- Collision or accident.

Dealing with spills

Make sure you have procedures to prevent pollutants from spilling or leaking when they're being delivered, loaded or moved around.

If you accidentally cause a spill, and it's safe to control, follow some simple rules:



Stop

- Stop work immediately
- Stop the leak or eliminate the source of it
- Shut down sources of heat or ignition and increase ventilation to disperse any fumes.

Contain

- Use pollution control equipment e.g. a spill kit
- Check the spill has not reached drains, watercourses or ground
- Cover drains and manholes to prevent it from entering the drainage system.

Notify

- Notify the emergency site contact and your supervisor once the spill has been contained.

Clean-up

- Use appropriate absorbent material to soak up the spill
- Follow your Duty of Care to dispose of contaminated materials responsibly, including your spill kit.

Remember only respond if you have been suitably trained, have the required materials on hand, and are wearing appropriate protective equipment.