

Hazardous Material Spill Response

Who should read this fact sheet?

This fact sheet applies to any Vermont business or municipality that handles hazardous material (including hazardous waste, petroleum products, or CERCLA hazardous substances*), and consequently may need to respond to a release of hazardous material (spill) to the environment. It summarizes the spill response requirements included under Section 7-105 in the Vermont Hazardous Waste Management Regulations (VHWMR) and describes response procedures for spills that occur at fixed facilities and during transportation.

How do I respond to a spill at a fixed facility?

1. Assess the Hazard and Perform Initial Response (if appropriate)

For spills that can be safely managed without assistance:

- Stop the spill at its source;
- Prevent spilled material from entering storm drains, waterways, drainage ditches, etc; and
- Contain spilled material using a barrier (absorbent pads or socks), temporary dike or trench.

For all other spills, a cleanup contractor will likely need to be hired since they have the training and equipment necessary to safely respond to dangerous hazardous material spills. A list of spill cleanup contractors that operate in Vermont is maintained on-line at

<http://dec.vermont.gov/waste-management/spills>

2. Report the Spill

Any hazardous material spill to the land or water that meets the following criteria must be immediately reported to the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Spill Response Team (spill team) by calling the **24-hour Hazardous Materials Spills Hotline at 1-800-641-5005**. *If there is any question about whether a spill is reportable, call.*

- A spill of 2 gallons or more;
- A spill that is less than 2 gallons, but poses a threat to human health or the environment (for example, a gallon of gasoline spilled to a wetland); or
- A spill that exceeds a CERCLA reportable quantity*.

Any person who has knowledge of a spill and who may be subject to liability for that spill, is responsible for reporting the spill. In addition to reporting to the DEC, any spill of hazardous material that impacts (or threatens) surface water (e.g., lakes, streams, wetlands) must also be reported to the U.S. Coast Guard via the National Response Center at **1-800-424-8802**.

3. Clean up and Follow up

Any business or municipality who may be responsible for a spill must:

- Ensure that the spill is cleaned up to the extent that it no longer presents a threat to human health or the environment;
- Make a hazardous waste determination for all spill cleanup materials;
- Ensure that contaminated soil/water/debris is collected and managed appropriately; and
- **For any reportable spill, submit a written follow-up report within 10 days detailing how the spill was cleaned up and how waste was managed.**

* CERCLA Reportable quantities of hazardous substances are listed in 40 CFR Section 302.4

Environmental Fact Sheet: Hazardous Material Spill Response

What happens when a spill is reported to the DEC?

When a spill is reported to the DEC, a spill team member will determine if on-site assistance is necessary to assess environmental impact and/or oversee cleanup efforts. While on the phone, the spill team member can provide assistance related to spill containment and cleanup, and the proper management of cleanup materials. The DEC's spill team can also assist with obtaining information about spilled materials, contacting other individuals with potential cleanup obligations, and, if needed, hiring a cleanup contractor.

It is important to report spills immediately so that the DEC can quickly assess the potential for environmental impact, and coordinate outside assistance as necessary. A delay in reporting can result in greater environmental impact and a more complicated and costly cleanup.

What happens when a hazardous material spill occurs during transportation?

Although the primary obligation of reporting and cleaning-up a hazardous materials spill that occurs during transportation lies with the owner or operator of the vehicle from which the material has been released, transportation related spills usually are reported to the DEC by the emergency responder (fire chief or police officer) who first arrives at the spill scene.

While transportation-related spills are subject to the same reporting requirements as those that occur at fixed facilities, any transportation-related spill that meets the criteria of a "Reportable Incident" specified in Section 171.15 of 49 CFR (the federal Department of Transportation regulations) must also be reported to the National Response Center at 1-800-424-8802. Examples of Reportable Incidents include a death or injury requiring hospitalization; closure of a major transportation artery or facility for more than one hour; and evacuation of the general public for more than one hour.

An incident commander (in most cases, the local fire chief) is usually designated to oversee the spill response effort in consultation with the DEC spill team. The responsible party(ies) may also be involved in the cleanup depending on their willingness and/or ability. Follow-up to the initial spill response is generally coordinated between the DEC's spill team and the responsible party(ies).

What are some best management practices for spill prevention and emergency preparedness?

- ✓ Develop a spill prevention plan; involve employees as they know how and why spills occur.
- ✓ When transferring liquids, use drip trays, funnels or other means to avoid spills.
- ✓ Use spring-loaded drum covers, valves or other positive shut-off devices.
- ✓ Keep all containers closed when not adding or removing material.
- ✓ Store all containers on an impervious surface (concrete) that is protected from weather.
- ✓ Instruct employees in spill response procedures. Cover basic safety precautions like:
 - Minimize contact with or walking in spilled material
 - Minimize inhalation of any gases, vapors or smoke that result from a spill
 - Promptly wash any skin that comes in contact with spilled material
- ✓ Post a list of emergency numbers next to the phone.
- ✓ Maintain spill control and containment equipment in a designated area.

For more information contact:

VTDEC-Waste Management Division
1 National Life Drive – Davis 1
Montpelier, VT 05620
802-828-1138

VTDEC-Environmental Assistance Office
1 National Life Drive – Davis 1
Montpelier, VT 05620
1-800-974-9559

For general program questions, contact Tim Cropley, DEC Spills Section Chief at 802-249-5346