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Auckland
Regional Council
TE RAUHITANGA TAIAO

Being prepared for a spill

Spills of environmentally harmful materials can happen anywhere at any time, polluting land and water. This Pollutionfacts pamphlet helps you by giving advice on how to avoid spills, train staff and prepare a Spill Response Plan.



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To start with, a few definitions:

Spill Response Plan (SRP) site-specific plan detailing how to deal with a 'spill'.

Spill occurs when any substance is accidentally discharged from a container or a controlled activity, into or onto the ground. Spills can range from a dropped 4-litre paint tin, to a leaking 200 litre drum, through to the rupture of a 5 million litre bulk fuel storage tank.

Substance any material not naturally found in harmful quantities in the environment. Practically all substances can cause pollution if allowed to escape into our environment including foodstuffs, fuel and oil, paint and ink, detergent, sediment and other chemicals - even those touted as biodegradable or environmentally friendly!

Pollution occurs when a substance soaks into the ground or escapes into a water-body. Even small amounts of pollution can injure and kill aquatic life or make water unsafe for human use.

Water-body any watercourse such as a stream, creek, river or stormwater drainage system, or any other natural water resource such as a lake, harbour, beach or groundwater reservoir.

The Law - Resource Management Act (1991)

Environment Court rulings consistently confirm three important points:

1. Companies and individuals are legally responsible for dealing with any foreseeable incidents that may occur while carrying out their activities. They have a legal duty to avoid, remedy or mitigate any harm to the environment resulting from their activity.
2. If daily activities include the use, storage or transport of any substance capable of causing environmental harm, it is foreseeable that a spill of that substance will occur at some time.
3. If companies and individuals can demonstrate that they were adequately prepared to deal with a spill and took all reasonable steps to clean up following an incident to minimise any harm to the environment, they are less likely to be punished by the court.

New rules in the proposed Auckland Regional Plan: Air, Land and Water make it a legal requirement to develop an Emergency Spill Response Plan if you use, store or transport environmentally hazardous substances



BOTTOMLINE:

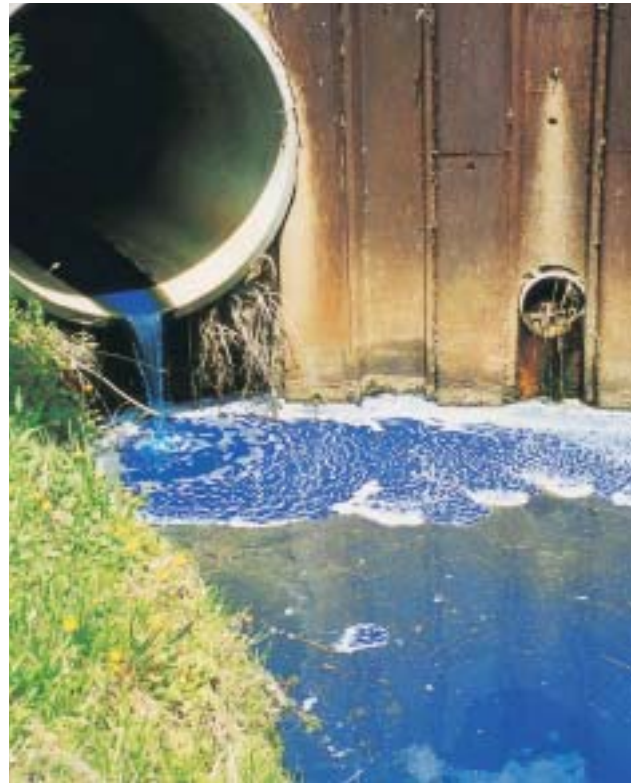
If you or your staff spill something and do not have a plan in place to prevent water or land pollution, you are exposing yourself to serious financial and legal risk, as well as unnecessarily harming our environment.

During an Emergency...

Sometimes the first reaction to a spill is to wash the spilt substance away with water – occasionally this is mistakenly done for reasons of public safety or convenience. However if a substance is considered too dangerous to leave lying around on the ground for reasons of fire or the hazard of poisonous fumes, then it is very likely to harm our beaches and streams. Washing it down the stormwater system is only transferring the problem to a location far more difficult to control.

Cleaning Up all of a Spill...

Often the bulk of spilt material is recovered at the point of spillage leaving a residue on the ground. These residues harm land and water by soaking into the ground and slowly seeping or being washed by rain into a nearby natural water body.



The BIG picture

- Remember every spill not promptly and properly cleaned up contaminates our land and water, causing increasing damage to our environment. This must be prevented if New Zealand is to remain 'Clean and Green'.
- Careful planning of facilities and operational procedures can reduce the risk of spillage and simple precautions can prevent a spillage becoming a pollution incident.
- When a spill occurs, speed of response is the most crucial factor to minimise pollution.
- If a spill leaves your site, you are legally responsible for cleaning and repairing the receiving environment. This may include removing residues from the stormwater system, stream bed and stream banks, restocking fish and nursing injured bird life. These costs can mount very quickly, and take considerable time.
- Substances we consider harmless, for instance food or silt, can have disastrous and deadly effects on delicately balanced ecological systems.

YOU CAN PREVENT SPILLS FROM CAUSING LAND AND WATER POLLUTION!

Preparing Your Own Spill Response Plan (SRP).

Follow these six simple steps to formulate your own SRP. Should you wish to prepare a more detailed plan you can get advice from one of the Auckland Regional Council's Pollution Control Officers, order a copy of the ARC's Environmental Operations Plan or contact an Environmental Consultant.

1. Assess Your Risk

- Ensure all substances are identified and clearly labelled.
- Understand the hazards associated with each substance used, stored or transported.
- Get the Material Safety and Data Sheets (MSDS) for all substances you use.
- Identify locations and causes of any past spills, plus possible high-risk areas and activities.

2. Reduce Your Risk

- Ensure high-risk areas such as loading docks, decanting and process areas are adequately contained and/or covered to prevent rainwater intrusion and contamination.
- Minimise the volume of substances stored at your site.
- Consider using less hazardous materials, for instance water based rather than solvent based inks.
- Ensure work areas are kept clean, tidy and safe at all times.

3. Prepare: Think ahead - what will you need to cope with a spill?

- Be specific. Ensure your plan covers each area of risk.
- Consider 'worst case' and 'most likely' case scenarios.
- Map out your site's drainage system - access points, connections to public systems and discharge points to natural waterways. Clearly label rainwater drains on site and on your map.
- Record and post notices on site giving contact names and numbers for emergency assistance and waste disposal agencies.
- Obtain supplies of containment, clean up, disposal and safety equipment required to deal with the substances you use. Store these close to areas of high-risk.

4. Draft Your Plan: Write two versions

- a. A specific and detailed plan for training purposes.
- b. A concise, one page version for posting at areas of high-risk (see the example in this Pollutionfacts pamphlet).

5. After a Spill - Review and Restock

- Immediately restock all spill response materials used.
- Report all incidents that require a clean-up response to management.
- Review your SRP and update as necessary to be better prepared.
- Try to learn from each incident and strive to prevent similar accidents from reoccurring.

6. And Finally, Train Your Staff

- When they join your company.
- At regular intervals to ensure swift action in the event of a spill.

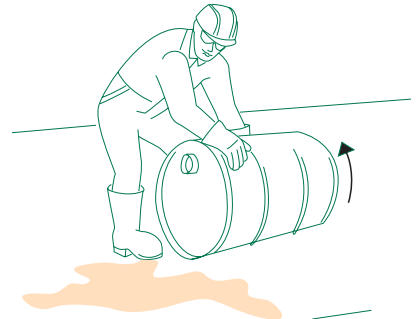


An effective SRP could look something like this..

IN CASE OF A SPILL OR LEAK

1. BE SAFE

- What is it?
- Do you need safety gear?

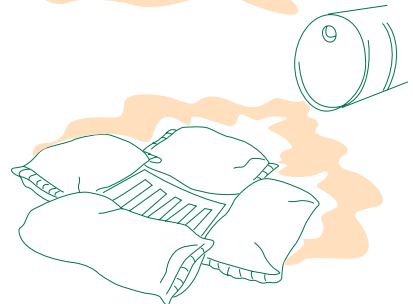


2. STOP THE SOURCE

- Turn off the tap, plug the leak or upright the container.

3. PROTECT STORMWATER

- Confine the spill with sandbags, booms or other suitable material.
- Block off access to stormwater grates with drain covers, shut-off valves etc.



4. NOTIFY

- Tell your supervisor.
- Inform other agencies if needed.
(24hr Pollution Hotline (09) 377 3107 if water or land pollution has or may occur).



5. CLEAN UP

- Neutralise hazardous substances.
- Pump or sweep into safe container.
- Clean up all residues of the spill without allowing wash water or sweepings to get into stormwater grates or the soil.

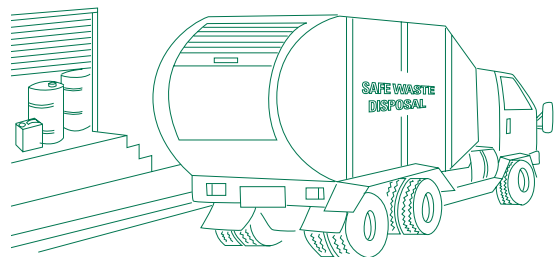


6. DISPOSE RESPONSIBLY

- Use a responsible waste disposal contractor to remove contaminated material and clean-up gear.

7. RESTOCK AND REVIEW

- Immediately replace all used clean-up material.
- Assess the cause of the spill and take any steps necessary to prevent recurrence.



Some Options for Clean-up Strategies are:

- Use a vacuum or road-sweeper to collect spilt material.
- Soak up the spilt material with a suitable absorbent product, then collect for disposal.
- Carefully block off any stormwater catchpits the spillage naturally drains to and have the material, and the wash down water, pumped from the catch-pit for collection.

If it is necessary to quickly wash a spill away for safety reasons, then you must identify the nature of the receiving environment to assess whether the spilt material can be captured at an alternative location. For example, somewhere within the stormwater system or at the outfall.

You must also IMMEDIATELY contact a Pollution Control Officer at Auckland Regional Council - one is always available on

09 377 3107 THE ARC'S 24 HOUR WATER POLLUTION HOTLINE

Getting Rid of Your Spill Wastes

- Reuse or recycle your wastes where practicable.
- Ensure your wastes can not leak out if you have disposed of them in a commercial waste bin.
- Hazardous wastes must be properly treated prior to disposal at a licensed landfill.
- All waste disposal must be via a responsible commercial waste contractor.

AT HOME

If you spill paint, oil or a household chemical outside, take immediate steps to prevent it from flowing down any external drains or contaminating your land. Absorb the spilt material with sand or paper, shovel into a container that can be closed and dispose of via the domestic rubbish.

If the substance is toxic call the Auckland Regional Council for disposal advice.

Important Points to Keep in Mind

- ALL external drains flow untreated, directly into local streams and harbours.
- It is NOT acceptable to wash a spilt material or residues into a stormwater drain.
- It is crucial to identify how and why a spill happened and act to prevent it from recurring.
- Even if a spilt substance does not seem dangerous or toxic, it will still cause water pollution if it gets into the stormwater system and/or the natural environment.

REMEMBER

- **Even small quantities of seemingly harmless materials can damage the environment.**
- **It is ILLEGAL to cause or allow water, land or air pollution.**
- **Always have a current, site specific Spill Response Plan, with equipment handy and your staff well trained, so that all spilt material can be cleaned up immediately and safely.**

For more information phone 09 366 2000

To report pollution phone the Pollution Hotline 09 377 3107

**THE BIG CLEAN UP.
0800 JOIN IN.**



**Auckland
Regional Council**
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FOR WAYS TO HELP THE ENVIRONMENT, JOIN THE BIG CLEAN UP, www.arc.govt.nz OR PHONE 0800 JOIN IN (56 46 46)