

Chemical and Oil Spill/Release Clean-Up and Reporting Requirements

Chemicals and oils are used throughout Penn State University. Chemicals may be loosely defined as any material that is corrosive, reactive, flammable, or toxic. This can include, for example, oil-based paints, alcohol, WD-40, and any number of laboratory materials. Oils include petroleum products, vegetable oils, hydraulic and mineral oils, etc. Through their use, or through the use of oil- or chemical-containing machinery and equipment, the potential exists to release these materials to the environment. This document summarizes spill/release clean-up and reporting requirements for these materials.

Responsibilities

Everyone is responsible for spill prevention, reporting, and sometimes, clean-up. Through the use of good handling procedures, we can minimize risk to ourselves, others, and the environment. If Penn State has spills or other releases, they must be reported to the proper regulatory agencies. Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) performs all regulatory notifications, and ensures that the environmental cleanup meets the regulatory requirements and standards.

Anyone that causes a spill/release is responsible for cleaning up the spill/release or for ensuring that others perform the clean-up. Anyone that comes across an unattended or orphaned spill/release is responsible for reporting that spill/release to a responsible party for clean-up and/or to EHS.

If Environmental Health and Safety is called when a spill/release occurs (see When to Report), they will provide oversight, assistance and/or clean-up, depending on the material and/or quantity. EHS also has spill control materials and protective clothing available that can be used in the event that a spill or release can not be controlled by the materials on site.

When to Report

When deciding whether a spill/release must be reported to EHS, the first consideration is whether it can reach surface waters (storm water drains, streams, channels, ditches, etc.). **Any spill/release to surface waters must be reported immediately, no matter what the quantity.**

In addition, spills/releases of oil containing materials must be reported to EHS if they exceed 1 quart with the exception of spills/releases that are confined to areas inside buildings that do not have floor drains. Spills/releases of less than 1 quart still must be cleaned up, as soon as possible!

Any spill/release of a highly hazardous chemical or of a large quantity (greater than one gallon is a good rule of thumb) must be reported to EHS. Highly hazardous materials include chemicals such as hydrofluoric acid, methylmercury, chlorine gas, bromine, sulfuric acid, etc. Spills of odiferous materials such as mercaptoethanol must also be reported. If you are not sure, call EHS.

For spills/releases that immediately threaten health and/or property, evacuate the area and immediately call 911. For spills/releases that threaten the environment and can not be readily handled by the facility, the initial notification should be made to 911 and afterwards to EHS (814-865-6391) as soon as possible. Please make sure that someone remains near the scene to provide information to the responders. Notification for spills/releases that do not immediately threaten health, property, or the environment should be made to Environmental Health and Safety when required (see When to Report). During normal working hours, the EHS phone is answered by office personnel. After hours, the EHS phone is answered by the PSU Police, who will contact EHS.

When reporting a spill/release, the following information is needed:

- Name and title of person reporting incident;
- Name and location of facility;
- Phone number where the person reporting the spill/release can be reached;
- Date, time, and location of the incident;
- Brief description of the incident, nature of the materials involved, estimated quantity of the materials spilled/released, possible hazards to human health or the environment, and type of containment and clean-up actions taken; and
- Extent of contamination of land, water, or air, if known (e.g., bodies of water).