Maintenance
Storm Water
Pollution Prevention Bulletin

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Cleaning Up Spills of Vehicle and Equipment Fluids

Accidental releases of vehicle fluids at maintenance sites can potentially discharge into storm water drainage systems and pollute receiving waters. Typical vehicle fluids include oil and hydraulic fluids leaking from vehicles and equipment, accidental spills from fueling operations, and leaks and spills around storage tanks and containers.

Leaks from maintenance equipment have the potential to threaten water quality and the environment.

This bulletin reviews key elements of the Best Management Practices (BMPs) from the latest requirements for cleaning up spills and leaks of vehicle fluids:

- Section 2.10.2 – Spill Prevention and Control
- Section 2.12.1 – Vehicle and Equipment Fueling
- Section 2.12.2 – Vehicle and Equipment Maintenance

Step 1: Be Prepared

Proper response to a vehicle fluid leak requires preparation:

- Maintain up-to-date spill prevention, control, and response plans.
- Train staff to identify and respond to spills safely and appropriately.
- Maintain appropriate and adequate supplies of cleanup materials at fueling areas, vehicle maintenance areas, cleaning areas, and vehicle and equipment parking areas.
- Regularly inspect vehicle parking, maintenance, cleaning, and fueling areas for leaks and spills.
- Repair or replace vehicles and equipment that consistently leak.
- Repair, or replace as needed, material and waste storage perimeter controls, containment structures, covers, and liners in order to contain spills and leaks.

Step 2: Evaluate and Contain

Evaluate the spilled material to determine the appropriate methods for cleaning up the spill. Vehicle fluids such as oil, fuels and hydraulic fluids are considered hazardous wastes and require appropriate safety precautions. Contact the Storm Water Coordinator or HazMat Coordinator for further assistance.

For spilled material, immediately contain the material to keep it from spreading and clean it up.

- Place absorbent materials or pads around leaks to soak up spills.
- For vehicles/equipment that are leaking, place a drip pan underneath to contain any additional leakage.

Absorbent pads can be used to contain and soak up spilled vehicles fluids during cleanup.

- Place a leaking container in appropriate spill containment or transfer the contents to another container.
- For leaks or spills that occur during storm events, to the extent that work can be accomplished safely, cover and protect the spilled material from storm water run-on.

Step 3: Cleaning and Disposing of the Waste

Once the spilled material has been contained, ensure that all of the material and absorbent has been cleaned up.

- Whenever possible, use "dry shop" methods to clean up spills.
- Avoid hosing down the spill area.
- Use an absorbent-type cloth on fuel pumps or damp mop on pavement in fueling areas.
- If rain water has accumulated in a contained area where a spill or leak has occurred, the contaminated water might be considered hazardous waste.
- Take additional precautions in situations where dry cleanup methods cannot be implemented to ensure that the water used for cleaning and decontamination is prevented from entering storm drainage systems or receiving waters.

Dispose of the contaminated wastes (spilled material, used cleanup materials, contaminated rain water) according to the following BMPs. Contact the Storm Water Coordinator or HazMat Coordinator for additional assistance.

- Section 2.10.3 – Hazardous Waste Management
- Section 2.10.2 – Solid Waste Management
- Section 2.10.6 – Liquid Waste Management

Conveniently located spill kits and cleanup containers encourage spill cleanups.

Additional information is available in the Caltrans Maintenance Manual, Chapter C-6, or from your District Maintenance Storm Water Coordinator. Questions or comments may be directed to Marty Cookman, HQ Storm Water Coordinator, marty_cookman@dot.ca.gov