



SPILL RESPONSE – CONTAINING BEFORE IT SPREADS

Spills can occur during cleaning, maintenance, or servicing activities. Whether it is water, chemicals, oils, or waste liquids, spills create immediate hazards. If not controlled quickly, they can spread, causing slips, chemical exposure, environmental damage, and disruption to operations.

This toolbox talk focuses on how to respond effectively to spills before they become bigger incidents.

Why Quick Response Is Important

Even small spills can quickly become dangerous if left unattended.

Risks include:

- Slips and falls for workers, staff, or the public.
- Exposure to hazardous substances.
- Damage to floors, equipment, or property.
- Contamination of drains or surrounding areas.
- Spread of the spill into larger work areas.

Acting quickly reduces risk and limits the impact.

Immediate Actions When a Spill Occurs

If you notice a spill:

- Stop the source of the spill if safe to do so.
- Warn others in the area.
- Isolate the area using signage or barriers.
- Prevent people from walking through the spill.
- Identify the substance before starting clean-up.

Never rush into a spill if you are unsure what the substance is.

Safe Clean-Up Practices

Once the area is controlled:

- Wear the correct PPE for the substance.
- Use spill kits or absorbent materials where available.
- Contain the spill to stop it spreading.
- Clean the area using approved methods.
- Dispose of contaminated materials correctly.
- Ensure the area is dry and safe before reopening.

Always follow site procedures and Safety Data Sheet (SDS) guidance where applicable.

Reporting and Prevention

All spills should be reported so that causes can be addressed.

Common causes include:

- Leaking containers or equipment.
- Poor storage of chemicals.
- Overfilled or damaged containers.
- Incorrect handling or transport.
- Lack of housekeeping.

Reporting helps prevent repeat incidents.

Your Responsibility

Every worker plays a role in spill prevention and response:

- Stay alert for potential hazards.
- Act quickly when a spill occurs.
- Use proper clean-up methods.
- Report all incidents and hazards.

Preventing a spill from spreading protects everyone.

Summary

Spills create immediate risks that can lead to injury, contamination, or damage. A fast and controlled response — stopping the source, isolating the area, and cleaning safely — prevents the situation from escalating. Always follow proper procedures and report spills to help prevent future incidents.

Discussion Points

1. What types of spills are most common in our work areas?
2. Where are spill kits located on site?
3. What should you do if you cannot identify the spilled substance?

