

EPA Guidelines

Disposal of used hydrocarbon absorbent materials

Updated March 2004¹

EPA 378/04: This guideline provides information on the disposal of absorbent materials used to clean up hydrocarbon spills in accordance with the Environment Protection Act 1993.

Introduction

Small spills of oils and similar liquid hydrocarbons (such as lubricating oils, fuel oils, cooking oils, and radiator coolants) occur from time to time in workshops, in industrial processes, and in domestic and farming activities. Such spills are sometimes collected using sand, sawdust, 'kitty litter', and similar materials; however, these materials have limited absorbent capacity and perform poorly if they become wet, often releasing much of the absorbed pollutant.

In recent times, specialised products and systems have been developed which provide a greater absorption and retention capacity than conventional granular materials. These products may be incorporated into 'spill kits' to deal with minor spills of oil and similar liquids.

Legislation

The principal legislation addressing pollution in South Australia is the *Environment Protection Act 1993* (the Act). In particular, section 25 imposes a general environmental duty on all persons undertaking an activity that may pollute, requiring them to take all reasonable and practicable measures to prevent or minimise any resulting environmental harm.

Disposal requirements

When the liquid spilled and absorbed is light-to-medium grade hydrocarbons, small quantities of used absorbent material – less than 0.1 m³, or 100 kg – may be disposed of as solid waste at a waste depot.

¹ Since last issued in September 2003, the USA Paint Filter and Liquid Release tests have been updated (p. 2).

This depot must be licensed to receive putrescible waste and/or commercial and industrial waste; disposal of the absorbent material is subject to the requirements that it:

- can be demonstrated to safely immobilise the absorbed liquid
- has been used correctly in accordance with the supplier's instructions so as not to allow free liquid to leak into waste receptacles.

To this end the product must pass the USEPA Paint Filter Test 9095A and the USEPA TCLP (toxicity characteristic leaching procedure) Test Method 1311. The supplier of the absorbent material should provide this information. The USEPA Paint Filter Test 9095A is that described in the SA EPA Guideline *Liquid Waste Classification Test* (September 2003).

Under such circumstances, the used absorbent material may be mixed with domestic or commercial and industrial waste for collection, transportation and disposal at a licensed waste depot

However, if:

- the quantity of used absorbent material exceeds 0.1 m³, or 100 kg, **or**
- the liquid absorbed is other than light-to-medium grade hydrocarbons, **or**
- the liquid includes 'Listed Waste' as set out in Schedule 1 Part B of the Act,

the used absorbent material should be directed to a licensed waste depot for appropriate treatment and/or disposal. Advice should be sought from the EPA (telephone (08) 8204 2004), or a waste management firm.

Currency of these guidelines

These guidelines offer advice to assist with compliance with the general environmental duty and specific environmental policies. They are subject to amendment and persons relying on the information should check with the EPA to ensure that it is current at any given time.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Legislation

Legislation may be viewed on the Internet at: www.parliament.sa.gov.au/dbsearch/legsearch.htm

Copies of legislation are available for purchase from:

Government Information Centre
Lands Titles Office, 101 Grenfell Street
Adelaide SA 5000

Telephone: 13 23 24
Internet: shop.service.sa.gov.au

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