

Disposal of used hydrocarbon absorbent materials

Updated August 2013

EPA 378/13: 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, industrial processes, and 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.

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 [US EPA Paint Filter Test 9095A](#) and the following leachability test methods:

- US EPA TCLP (toxicity characteristic leaching procedure) Test Method 1311 of AS 4439.3; and
- Multiple Extraction Test (MEP).

The choice of leachability test method will vary depending on the source of the contamination. The supplier of the absorbent material should provide this information. The US EPA Paint Filter Test 9095A is that described in the 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.

Disclaimer

This publication is a guide only and does not necessarily provide adequate information in relation to every situation. This publication seeks to explain your possible obligations in a helpful and accessible way. In doing so, however, some detail may not be captured. It is important, therefore, that you seek information from the EPA itself regarding your possible obligations and, where appropriate, that you seek your own legal advice.

Further information

Legislation

Legislation may be viewed on the Internet at: <www.legislation.sa.gov.au>

Copies of legislation are available for purchase from:

Service SA Government Legislation Outlet	Telephone:	13 23 24
Adelaide Service SA Centre	Facsimile:	(08) 8204 1909
108 North Terrace	Website:	< shop.service.sa.gov.au >
Adelaide SA 5000		

For general information please contact:

Environment Protection Authority	Telephone:	(08) 8204 2004
GPO Box 2607	Facsimile:	(08) 8124 4670
Adelaide SA 5001	Freecall (country):	1800 623 445
	Website:	< www.epa.sa.gov.au >
	Email:	< epainfo@epa.sa.gov.au >
